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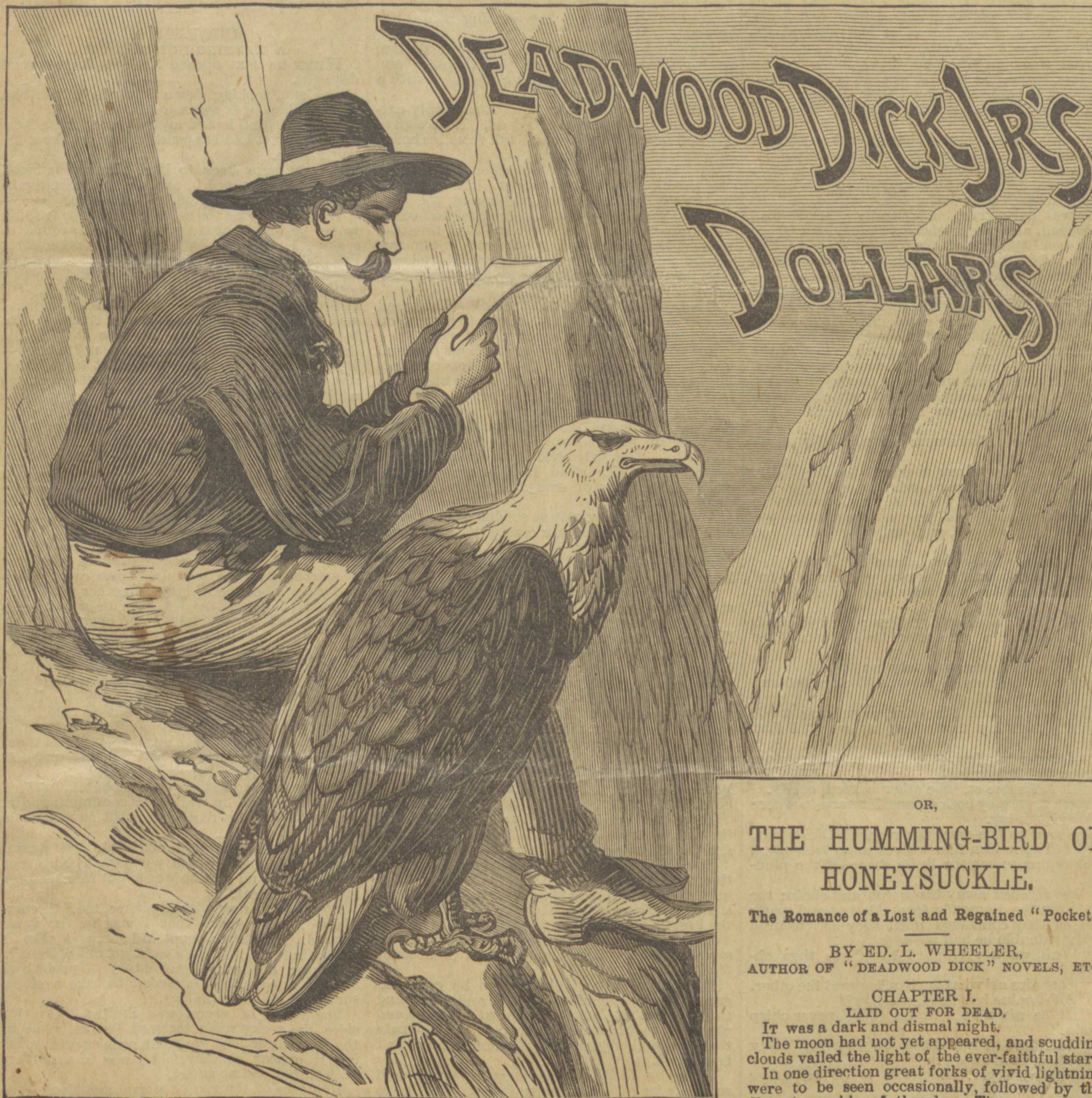
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SPREADING OUT THE AERIAL MISSIVE DEADWOOD DICK READ THE STRANGE MESSAGE.

OR,
**THE HUMMING-BIRD OF
HONEYSUCKLE.**

The Romance of a Lost and Regained "Pocket."

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

LAI D OUT FOR DEAD.

It was a dark and dismal night.
The moon had not yet appeared, and scudding clouds veiled the light of the ever-faithful stars.
In one direction great forks of vivid lightning were to be seen occasionally, followed by the distant rumble of thunder. There was every prospect for one of Arizona's dreaded storms.

Dreaded storms we say, for such they are. Suddenly they come, at times, and as suddenly go, but their fury is great while they last. Whole clouds appear to drop bodily to the earth, and in a few minutes mere trickling mountain rivulets are transformed into raging torrents, and hitherto dry gulches are swept by seething avalanches of water.

On a lonesome trail that wound its tortuous way through one of these mountain gulches, with face upturned to the darkened sky, lay a man.

His hair was matted with blood, with which his forehead and one side of his face, too, were stained, and he was to all appearances dead.

He was young, apparently not more than twenty-seven years of age, and handsome, even now. He was attired in what had been a fine suit of rich velvet, and near by lay a fine white felt hat, while his feet were incased in patent-leather boots.

But, there was every indication that he had been robbed. First, the condition in which we find him. Then, his watch and chain had been jerked away, tearing pocket and button-hole; his tie of white silk had been cut off short; the front part of the brim of his hat had been cut out, and every button was gone from his coat and vest. More than that, several inches had been cut from the sleeves of his coat, and a strip about an inch wide had been cut, or torn, from each leg of the trousers, where it had covered the outside seam, full length.

And this man who had thus "fallen among thieves," who was he? It was none other than Richard Bristol—Deadwood Dick, Junior.

The redoubtable Richard laid low! How had it happened?

To explain, we must go back about an hour in point of time, and show what took place then.

That hour saw Deadwood Dick, mounted upon a large, spirited black horse, making his way along through the silent gulch.

It was dark, true, but friendly stars flashed overhead, and never more brightly, for there was then little sign of the coming clouds. Yet there was, withal, a certain oppressiveness in the atmosphere.

"I don't like this deathlike stillness of the air," Dick remarked to himself. "We are likely to see a storm before we are many hours older, old fellow," he added, addressing his horse.

He urged the willing animal on as fast as the darkness and the nature of the route would permit, but their best speed was necessarily slow, and he was all unaware that two men were prowling after him, on foot, their feet muffled in rags.

Both these fellows were armed, and upon an evil errand bent.

Gradually they drew nearer to the lone rider, using more and more caution as they approached, and then, when they had come quite near, or evidently as near as they dared approach, they stopped, and one raised his rifle to his shoulder.

They were at a point where there was just enough light to enable them to see their intended victim in outline, and they took advantage of it.

There was a momentary pause; then the flash and report of a rifle broke the stillness of the night.

It was a shot that was only too fatal.

Without a groan, Deadwood Dick reeled and fell from the saddle.

He struck upon the hard, unyielding trail, forcibly, and lay motionless, as we still find him.

"Ha! yer has done et, pard!" one of the murderous wretches cried.

"Et looks like et," the other agreed, coolly.

With that, they both sprung forward to where their victim lay.

As soon as the assassins reached Dick's side, they fell upon him like wolves upon their prey, each trying to get the lion's share of the plunder.

One snatched away his watch and chain; the other cut the diamonds from his hat and scarf; and so they continued until they had secured every valuable he had possessed.

"Wull, we hev skinned him," one then observed.

"Thet aire ar' what we hev," agreed the other.

"An' I opine he's dead, ain't he?"

"Ef he ain't he will be. He'll never chirp again."

"Then let's take his horse an' be gettin' away frum heer soon's we kin."

"I'm with yer. But, who is ter have ther hoss?"

"We'll hev ter sell him an' dervide ther money."

"Yas, thet's what we'll do. Wull, you ride ther beast, ef yer wants ter, an' we'll be mosey-in' erlong."

No second invitation was needed, and the fellow bounding into the saddle, they made all haste to get away from the scene of their crime.

And now just a word more of explanation.

Deadwood Dick had recently brought one of his detective exploits to a successful ending, and had not yet been able to discard his disguise.

He had put in a sudden appearance at a town called Nutmeg Bonanza, dressed in a most dazzling manner, and sporting diamonds and money almost without limit. There, calling himself "Golconda the Gorgeous," he had "cut a wide swath," finally bringing his game to an end with a round turn.

His business there being ended, he had set out immediately, leaving the matter in the hands of those whom it more closely concerned, he having done his part. And he was on his way to the place where he had taken on his fancy disguise when he met with the terrible fate we have shown.

Need fuller explanation be made? His display of wealth had aroused the cupidity of many, and these two had resolved upon having it at the cost of murder. They had dogged his trail to this lonely spot, and here they carried out their foul design in the manner shown.

The indications of the coming storm increased.

More frequent became the lightning flashes; nearer came the sound of the thunder, and finally a gust of wind swept up the gulch with a wild wail.

Still Dick did not move, and it was only natural to conclude that he was dead. Not a sign of life had he exhibited since his fall from his horse, now more than an hour ago.

Another gust of wind swept through the gorge, this time wafting away the hat that had been lying near the body, and tugging at the garments as though it would tear them off and carry them away too. Yet another wild breath—rather blast, and down came the rain in blinding sheets, accompanied by lightning and thunder that threatened to rend asunder the very mountains.

Deadwood Dick was deaf to it all. Limp and lifeless lay his body, with the rain beating upon it and the wind screaming over it at will.

The blood was washed clean from his face and head in a moment, and in the intervals of blinding light it could be seen that his face had upon it the hue of death, cold and grim.

Describe the storm? Next to impossible. It did not last more than ten minutes, but it was all that we have already said of such storms, and more. The water had come down in literal cloud-bursts. The wind had, in many places, denuded the hills of every living thing, from shrub to tree.

And the stopping was as sudden as the beginning had been. The rain ceased, the wind was gone, and it was over.

Yet that ghastly body lay where it had fallen.

The storm was over, true, but there was something more to follow.

In a little time a distant roar was heard. Nearer and nearer it grew, until finally the creating cause was at hand. A great, rushing, boiling, foaming body of water swept down the gulch, carrying everything before it.

The trail on which the body of the murdered man lay was high up, but in a few minutes the seething waters began to reach for him even there, as though hungry to embrace him in their boiling midst.

Higher and higher they climbed, until at length they began to lave and play around his head.

There the height seemed to be reached, and there the halt was called, the waves tossing the dead man's hair about with gentle touch.

But Deadwood Dick was not yet done with the world, though it had been a close call for him, and after a long time his eyes opened and a shudder passed over his body, as though with the heart's first throb as life returned.

For some time he lay there, looking up at the stars, completely dazed, and at loss to account for anything.

It was some time longer before he could exercise the power of connected and reasoning thought, but at length he raised his hand and placed it to his head, as though he felt pain there, as undoubtedly he did though still half benumbed.

Little by little consciousness returned, and suddenly he gave a great start and struggled to a sitting position.

"What has happened?" was his demand. "I

have met with foul play of some sort. Where am I? What raging river is this? I must have been in it. Oh! how my head pains."

Again he put his hand to his head, as he had now done many times.

"Shot!" he exclaimed. "A bullet has punctured me, sure, and it is a wonder that it did not finish me. It has glanced off, though, and there is some life in me yet. Now, who was the cuss that did it? Let me think, where was I? and what—Ha! I recall it now. I was riding through a gulch, on my way back to the railroad station from whence I set out for Nutmeg. Some one must have popped me over for the sake of the dollars—Yes, that was it! I have been robbed!"

It took but a moment for Dick to assure himself of that, when once the thought came to him, and he soon came to realize how thoroughly it had been done.

"They laid me out for dead, no doubt about that part of it," he reflected, "and they haven't left me so much as a toothpick. But, I'll bet they'll repent of the job, if I can find them," grimly.

In a little time longer Dick tried to rise, but his head grew suddenly dizzy, and after a vain effort to retain his grip upon consciousness, he fell over, and there he remained, while the hours dragged by.

CHAPTER II.

A WARNING NOTICE FOUND.

WHEN he next opened his eyes it was broad daylight.

The sun, looking down into the gulch, had warmed him back again to life.

He sat up and looked around, wondering for a moment what had happened, to bring about his being there.

It soon came back to him. He remembered riding into the gulch, and then his coming to and finding himself wounded and alone.

With that came the recollection of the rushing water he had heard, and he looked around to see where it was. But, there was none of it left. The gulch was as innocent of water, almost, as it had been before the storm.

"Ha! it was a storm!" Dick exclaimed. "I remember, now, that the air felt like one as I was riding along. It has been a scorcher, too, by the looks of things. Perhaps it was the lightning that laid me out, and not a shot—But, no, for here is where the bullet tapped me, and the fact that I have been robbed shows what I was shot for."

"Yes, it was for my wealth that I was popped over. The dollars I displayed on my fancy costume no doubt got me into trouble. And I suppose they're gone for good, too—But, perhaps not. There is some life in me yet, and the rascal who toppled me over may find out that my dollars will burn him before he is done with the matter. Let me see: I had just one thousand three hundred and forty dollars in gold in my belt, and on my garments, in the place of buttons. Then my diamonds were worth a matter of a thousand more, while my loose cash, watch and chain stood me in nearly another thousand. In round numbers, the fellow made a haul of a clean three thousand dollars and over."

"That is too much to lose without a fight for it. I must see what can be done about it. There may be a camp not many miles from this, and if there is, the fellow may be there. It will pay me to look around a little, anyhow. But I cut a sorry figure now, and that is cold fact. Coat-sleeves shortened, holes cut where buttons ought to be, all wet and muddy—verily, I must look like a scarecrow. And the great question is, What am I going to do about it?"

That was the question, sure enough.

Dick had got up while thus communing, and was surveying his damaged outfit as well as he could.

He was feeling pretty much like himself again, except that there was a wonderfully sore spot on his head, and that he was about famished for something to eat.

"They got away with my horse, too," he complained. "It seems that I was in for it all around. But they did not kill me, and that is the main thing. Well, I must get out of here."

Having finished his inventory of profit and loss, as it were, he proceeded to take a closer survey of his surroundings.

The range of vision was limited. On two sides the rocky walls hemmed him in, while in the other directions the gulch soon curved, making it appear as though he was in a narrow pocket that had no outlet.

Evidence of the recent storm and flood were plain to be seen. The bottom of the gulch had been swept clean, but Dick noticed a little way

ahead that a big tree was lying where the water had left it, and as he looked at this tree, that a few hours before had no doubt been a thing of beauty on the mountain-side, an exclamation escaped him.

"Blame me if that don't look like the body of a man, there by the tree!" he ejaculated. "I must go and see about it. Yes," as he came near, "that is what it is. Poor fellow! he was less fortunate than I."

When he came opposite the tree, Dick left the trail and climbed down to the bottom of the gulch where the body lay.

He found that it was caught fast among the smaller branches of the tree, on the bottom side, and was lying face-downward.

Catching hold, he pulled it out and turned it over, and found it to be the remains of a man of thirty.

He had a mustache, and a stubby beard of two weeks' growth covered the face, a face that was not by any means bad-looking. The body was of medium size, and was well filled out and decidedly muscular. The face had every indication of health, and though the man was roughly clad, he showed personal care and cleanliness.

His outfit consisted of a rough but whole coat, a blue flannel shirt, a pair of rough boots and trousers of "ironclad" jean. A belt was around his waist, in which was a single revolver.

"Here is a chance for a trade of clothes that is not to be despised," Dick said to himself. "I do not like the idea over-much, but, necessity is urgent, and the poor fellow looks as though he was healthy and clean. I'll have to rob him, I guess, and here goes."

So without any further deliberation, Dick began to take the clothes from the dead man. The garments were wet, of course, but they were whole and comparatively clean, and that was the main thing.

Dick hung them out upon the tree where the sun had full play upon them, and in a little while they began to steam, in the warm atmosphere.

The now nude body lay where it had been left, and as Deadwood Dick looked upon it he felt that he had seen the man somewhere in life.

But, where and when? Try as he would, he could not remember the time or place, but the certainty of the impression remained. The face was familiar, he knew, but— Ha! now he had it. The dead man strongly resembled himself—Deadwood Dick!

It was with something of a shock that Dick realized the fact, but so it was, as he could now plainly see. Not that the likeness was by any means perfect, but the general resemblance was quite strong.

"That's what it is," Dick decided; "the fellow looks like me. I wonder who he was? I must bear in mind his appearance, and— There is a mark on his arm!"

He sprang forward and looked closer.

It was only a small point of blue that he had seen, but, on lifting the arm he found two letters worked in the skin in ink.

These letters were "H. W."

"Strange that I did not see them at first," Dick mused, as he studied them. "But, then, I was not looking for anything of the kind. Here they are, plain enough. What do they mean? They are, of course, the initials of the dead man's name. I will remember them. H. W."

Dick cast his glance about for a place where he could bury the body, for he was too humane to think of leaving it where it was, and his eye fell upon a likely spot. It was behind a massive boulder, where the rushing water had piled up a great heap of sand and mud. But, he had nothing with which to dig.

That deficiency was soon supplied, however, for near by was a flat splinter, of stone, several inches broad. With that he set to work, and in half an hour a grave was ready. Then in it he laid the body of the dead man, with all the tenderness possible.

"There, poor fellow, rest in peace, whoever you are," Dick said, as he finished covering the body. "I know you not, but I have done with you as I would like to be done by, myself."

Dick laid stones upon the grave, so that it could not be disturbed, and then gave his attention to the fast drying clothes.

In half an hour more they would be ready for him, so he threw off his own outer garment, and stood around in the sun to give his underwear a chance to dry while he waited.

"I am all fitted out, except for a hat," he mused. "I shall have to do without that luxury, I guess, for the present— Ha! what is this?"

Something of a bright red color in the foliage of the trees had caught his eye at the moment.

Looking in, more closely, he discovered that it was the very thing he was wanting, a hat. It was a hat of the broad slouch pattern, and of a dark, rusty color. The inside of the crown, on the contrary, was lined with a piece of fiery red flannel.

Dick soon managed to get hold of it, and drawing it out, examined it.

It was not unlike other hats of its kind, except for the padding of red flannel in the crown.

That was something that Deadwood Dick could not understand. In Arizona, it certainly was not needed for extra warmth. But, there it was, and what was it for? He was obliged to give it up.

The hat as it was, was accepted and donned with satisfaction and when, finally, the clothes were dry, he drew the garments on and was ready to leave the vicinity.

The suit fitted him well, and he felt quite comfortable, once more. The boots were slightly too big and quite heavy; but they would answer.

By this time, too, his head was feeling much better, and Richard was almost himself again.

Clambering up the rocks to the trail, he set out in the direction in which he had been traveling the previous night.

He did not look like the same man. With his slouch hat, rough coat, blue-flannel shirt, jean trousers and heavy boots, no one who had seen him as the Gorgeous Golconda would be likely to recognize him now.

Some ten miles he had tramped, perhaps, when he came to a sudden halt.

In front of him, on a big tree, was a rudely-printed notice.

It was to the following effect, viz:

"NOTICE!"

"Pilgrims, this trail on yer right leads to the grandalucous town of Honeysuckle. Rooms all full, and no more citizens wanted. Keep away. We don't intend to have any more popperlation than what we have got now. It is ten big miles from this point to the town, so to save yerself a tramp there fur nothin', don't come. You won't be allowed to stay, so save yerself the trouble of comin', and us the trouble of turnin' youtface about, or providin' you with a rope and coffin."

"Yures, with my spurs on,
"ROBIN KERDOON, Mayor."

Bristol read it through twice, and then smiled. "That is a new departure, verily," he muttered. "That takes the bung right out of the barrel. For pure and unmitigated gall, Mr. Robin Kerdoon, Mayor, you just set up on your hind legs and howl for the prize."

"I'm going there; that is settled," he said, grimly. "It is probably the nearest camp to the point where I was robbed, and I may find my three thousand dollars there. So, Mr. Kerdoon, I'll give you a call," and the adventurer faced toward this unknown town of Honeysuckle, walking into a danger of which he little dreamed.

CHAPTER III.

THE AERIAL MESSENGER.

THE trail was none of the best. There were indications that horses traveled it, but for a vehicle it was impassable. It was ruggedly rough, and in some places so narrow that two horses could not pass abreast, while in places it was dangerous.

The starting point, where Dick had found the notice posted on the tree, was in a rather pleasant valley. From there, the trail entered a narrow defile, hugging one side for a long distance.

At one point Dick stopped. It was at a place where the trail was not more than three feet wide, at most. On the left hand a wall of rock stretched upward, while on the right was a sheer descent of hundreds of feet. Across the canyon to the opposite wall was not more than twenty feet.

"A nasty place," Dick muttered, as he took off his hat to cool his head and to feel of his wound. "A bad spot for two horsemen to meet, by Harry! I would not care to get in such a fix, and that's putting it plain."

He was about to replace the hat again, when he noticed that the red flannel lining was quite wet, though the outside was about dry.

"That is what keeps my head hurting," he muttered. "I'll turn the thing inside-out, and see how that will work. It may not be beautiful to look at, but it will be more comfortable."

He suited action to the words, and replaced the hat on his head with the red flannel on top.

He rested a few minutes, and was about going on when he was startled by the sudden flight of a huge bird through the canyon.

"An eagle!" he exclaimed.

He went on, but had taken barely a dozen steps when back came the bird, and this time flying nearer to him than before.

"You try that once more," Dick observed quietly, "and I'll try a shot at you, if this revolver is good for anything."

He hardly expected to see the bird again, but in a moment back it came, when Dick raised his weapon and pulled trigger.

But there was no report, only the click of the hammer.

The bird went on, but at slow speed this time, and immediately it turned and began to hover right overhead.

"Blame me if this don't beat snakes!" Dick ejaculated. "I'll see what the fool of a bird will do, anyhow."

There was plenty of light, as the sun was now shining directly into the canyon, and it was easy to watch the movements of so big a bird as an eagle, and such this certainly was.

Suddenly, as he was still looking at it, Dick uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Fastened to the eagle's neck was something white that fluttered as it flew.

"If it were a pigeon," Dick thought, "I would swear that it's a carrier; but whoever heard of an eagle playing *that* role? Blame me if I don't believe that's what it is, though! Lucky it wasn't one of my own revolvers that I snapped at it."

The eagle was now coming down, and seeing that it was coming right at him, Dick stepped aside; seeing which the bird rose again, and fluttered back and forth as if anxious to make a landing.

Dick hardly knew what to make of it.

It was plain that the eagle did not intend to fight, so Dick resolved that next time he would stand still and see what would be done.

Down the great bird came, and alighted right upon Dick's head, gripping its claws into the red flannel that was sewed on the crown, and there it sat, apparently contented and happy.

A sudden thought struck Dick.

Was the red flannel on the hat a signal known to this bird?

If so, what manner or mystery had he stumbled upon by taking upon himself the garb of the dead man?

It seemed so wholly improbable that he could not believe it, but, now that it came to mind, he had seen this same bird several times before that morning, but at a distance.

Reaching up, he took hold of the eagle, gently, and feeling its hold relax upon his hat, he lifted it from his head and put it on the ground. It was about as peculiar an experience with a fowl of the air as he had ever had.

The eagle did not offer to stir from where he had put it, and so, sitting down by the novel message-bearer, Dick removed the paper from its neck, where it had been secured with a fine wire, and proceeded to open it. It was a piece of white writing-paper, without envelope, the wire around the eagle's neck having been run through its folds.

Spreading out the aerial missive, Deadwood Dick read the strange message:

"DEAR HENRY:—Where are you? Has anything happened? Do you need my help? Three days absent, and not a word from you! What does it mean? Old Baldy was out all day yesterday, and I start him at daylight to-day. Do not let him return without some answer, or I shall go mad. I cannot imagine what is keeping you so long, and really fear the worst. If you are alive, answer. As ever,
"JACQUETTA."

Dick read it over again and again.

He was trying to understand it, thoroughly.

The eagle stood patiently by, the while, winking as solemnly as an owl.

"It is from a woman to a man, that is plain enough," Dick reflected. "But, was it intended for that poor fellow whose clothes I am wearing? The name agrees with the first initial on his arm."

A sudden thought came to him. He had not examined the pockets of the clothes he had taken from the dead man. He had thought of it, while they were drying, but not since.

Now his hands flew from pocket to pocket, rapidly, but little or nothing was found—no money, no paper or pencil, and the absence of such things led Dick to believe that the man had been robbed, as he himself had been.

Dick had had a pencil in his own vest pocket, or believed it was there, but he had not thought to take it out before rolling his clothes into a bundle and cramming them into a crevice in the wall of the gulch; that being the manner in which he had disposed of them.

There was, hence, no way by which he could

answer this appealing message. He had nothing to write with, and nothing that he could send back as a token that the message had been read.

But, suddenly, he thought of something. It was a simple tie he had found on the neck of the dead man.

It was of blue stuff, lighter than the shirt, and Dick had put it on himself.

Taking that off in haste, he wound it around the neck of the eagle, made it secure, and bade the bird begone.

But, the eagle did not move, and Dick was at loss how to make him go. He did not want to frighten the bird, or hurt it, but he had to start it somehow.

"If I only knew the combination," he said aloud, "I could no doubt set you going fast enough, but I don't. I take it for granted that your name is Old Baldy, but that knowledge don't help the matter any. I see I must resort to desperate means, so here goes."

He had risen, and now picking up the big bird, he threw it out over the yawning chasm.

That made the eagle use its wings, of course, but it was only to rise a little distance, hover for a moment as it had done before, and then settle again on Dick's hat.

"I object to that sort of practice seriously," Dick complained. "It may be fun for you, Baldy, but it is hard on my wounded head. I'll start you again, and then if you don't go I'll be tempted to wring your neck."

He took the eagle from his head again, this time dropping his hat as he did so, and once more threw it out over the dark depth.

The bird rose and circled the same as before, but, after a momentary pause, in which it looked keenly down, it stretched its wings and soared away, and was speedily out of sight.

"Well, I've done it, it seems," mused Dick, "though I don't know how. There was nothing different this time from the other, unless I used a little more force— Ha! perhaps the difference was this red flannel on the hat! I had the hat on before, but this time it was on the ground."

Of course he could not tell whether he had guessed the truth or not, but there was certainly something in the idea.

Picking up the hat, he replaced it on his head and started on, but he had gone only a little distance further when, on turning a short bend in the trail, he came face to face with half a dozen rough-looking men.

Dick's hand fell to his hip, but before he had thought of drawing a weapon, there came a wild yell from the half-dozen fellows, and as many weapons covered him.

"We has got yer, has we?" the foremost of the six cried.

"It looks that way," Dick agreed, smiling.

"Bet yer life et does!" chimed in the others.

"And what are you going to do with me?" Dick asked.

"You'll find that out fast enough, cuss ye, when we gits you back to Honeysuckle again."

"You can't very well take me back again to a place where I have never been," Dick carelessly remarked.

"What!" was the exclamation, "d'ye mean ter tell us that ye never was at ther town o' Honeysuckle?"

"That is just what I do say," Dick affirmed. "I had no intention of going there, either, till I saw a notice warning folks to keep away, when it entered my noddle that I'd call around and see what sort of a town it is."

"Wull, dast yer gall, anyhow! Mebby ther next thing you'll say wull be that you ain't Hen Wilburt, what killed Dancin' Dave."

Deadwood Dick quickly noted the name. It corresponded to the initials on the dead man's arm. And he saw, too, that it was a case of mistaken identity. In taking the dead man's clothes, he had run the risk of being mistaken for him. But, little had he dreamed that anything serious would come of it.

"Well to be frank with you, I must deny that, too," he cheerfully responded. "I never heard the name of Hen Wilburt before in my life, and that is certainly not my name."

The six men laughed as though they looked upon this as the best kind of a joke they had ever heard.

"Wull, yer has got a harder nerve nor what we thort ye had," the foremost of the band complimented. "Yer kin stand thar and tell us that without winkin' oncet. But, et don't go down. Yer has managed ter git shaved, we allows, but thet don't change yer name fer ye, not by a gol darn sight et don't. You is ther same Hen Wilburt, an' back to Honeysuckle yer goes, thar ter swing fer the killin' of poor Dave Doyle. D'ye hear my bazzoo?"

"I hear you twitter," answered Dick, "and now you hear me: You are likely to find that you have run up against the sharpest snag you ever struck in your life. Go on with the funeral."

CHAPTER IV.

OUTCROPPINGS OF MYSTERY.

DEADWOOD DICK saw that he was in a bad box.

But he did not quail. He was too well used to that sort of thing.

The six men looked at one another, but at the same time taking care not to let Dick have a chance to reverse the order of things and get the "drop" on them.

"Look 'e hyar," the spokesman for the six cried, "et strikes me thet you hev been gittin' yer narves tightened up sence we seen yer last, Hen Wilburt. But thet don't alter ther fax of ther case any."

"You will find that I have got a good share of that article, nerve, if I get a fair chance to prove it to you," responded Dick. "But if I am Hen Wilburt, as you insist, where have I been for the past three days? From the remarks you have let fall, I take it that I have been a prisoner at Honeysuckle."

"In course yer has! What sort o' fool-talk is et you is givin' us? Wasn't yer in ther jail when ther flood kem an' toppled et over last night? An' hain't we jest sot out ter hunt fer yer kerkiss? I sh'ud snicker ef ye wasn't!"

So, that was the explanation of it. That was how poor Henry Wilburt met his fate.

"That is the way it was, eh?" observed Dick, thoughtfully. "I was in jail, waiting to be hanged, eh? And the—"

"Say," the spokesman for the six suddenly interrupted, "s'pose you jest lift yer han's where ye won't be tempted ter try ter draw ther aire popper, wull ye? Et may save us ther trouble o' plantin' ye prematoorly."

"Certainly, anything to be obliging, gentlemen," Dick cheerfully agreed, and, as there was no help for it, he complied with the reasonable request.

"Thar, thet looks more like biz," the spokesman remarked. "Now, ez you war a-sayin'."

"As I was saying," Dick went on, "the flood came and swamped the calaboose, and that was the end of me, was it? Well, it is some satisfaction to know that much about myself, anyhow."

"Gol darn yer pictur!" the foremost man of the six cried, "do yer still mean ter try ter cram et down our necks thet you ain't Hen Wilburt? Ef ye do, then who in all blazes be ye? Come, now, thet aire ar' a fair question."

"As fair as can be," Dick agreed. "Now, if I am Hen Wilburt, what are you going to do with me?"

"Hang yer, in course!" cried the gang.

"And if I am not that man, what then?"

"We'll hang yer anyhow, on gen'ral principles," declared the spokesman.

"Then it don't seem to make any difference one way or the other," Dick concluded. "All you want is somebody to hang. Well, if you think I'll fill the bill, go on with the funeral, as I said before."

It was plain that the six were puzzled.

Dick could not know what manner of man Henry Wilburt had been, but it was to be seen plainly that his, Dick's, showing of cool nerve was more than these fellows were used to seeing in the other man.

In point of fact, they had said as much.

"Wull, I ber darn!" the spokesman exclaimed. "Ther flood hev filled yer full o' sand, anyhow, Hen Wilburt, an' thet aire ar' a fact ez sure ez my name ar' Bob Jolly."

"Bob Jolly is your name, eh?" said Dick. "That is a jolly name, anyhow. I suppose your every-day name is Jolly Bob, eh?"

"Thet aire ar' whar ye make a mistake," Mr. Jolly informed. "I am called One-ear Bob, fer short."

"Ha! that's so! You have lost one of your auricular members, haven't you?"

"Yas, but et took jest seven good men ter chaw et off, an' after that every one of 'em did some tall chawin' on lead. That's ther sort of a bob-tailed kangaroo I am, an' you want ter bear et in mind."

"Well, what are you going to do about this matter?" Dick inquired.

"Thet's so; we kain't fool hyar all day. I'll have two of ther boys bind ye, an' then we'll set out fer Honeysuckle, to ther tune of When Johnny Comes Marchin' Home, or somethin' of that kind."

"That will be quite the proper caper," Dick agreed, with a show of cheerfulness.

He had been calculating the chances of attack-

ing the whole six then and there, but had decided against such a move.

One thing, he had no trusty weapons, and then, too, he knew that his strength was not yet recruited, after the wound he had received.

So two of his captors stepped forward, and he was speedily bound.

When that was done one of the men was told to lead the way, and Dick was ordered to follow him. The others followed after Dick, and in that way the procession set out for Honeysuckle.

They had not gone a great distance when Dick espied the eagle again.

It was coming toward them, down the gulch, but was quite high up. He kept his eye on it, and when it came nearer it stopped overhead, as though watching the men on the lonesome trail.

In putting on the hat, after he had got clear of the eagle before, he had put the red lining out of sight by turning the hat back to its proper form.

He was soon glad of this, for, after watching them for a few moments, the eagle soared away, and was lost to sight.

"What in durnation be ye gazin' at?" demanded One-ear Bob.

He, too, looked up, but was too late to see the bird.

"Why, I'm counting the stars," answered Dick, soberly.

Mr. Jolly was right behind Dick.

"Countin' ther stars!" he cried. "How kin you see stars in daylight? Durn me ef I don't begin ter believe you has gone crazy."

"Oh, I'm not half so crazy as you may think," Dick reassured. "That was only a polite way of telling you it was none of your business, but your head was too thick to appreciate the point."

"Oh, et war, wur et? Well, jest let me impress my boot on ye, so, an' see ef you kin 'pre-sheate that!"

With the words, he gave Dick a lifting kick behind.

"You will get that back with interest, before you are a week older," Dick gave warning. "I will lift you twice, in the same place, in a manner that will surprise you, so bear it in mind."

"Et ain't no use fer you ter talk like that," Mr. Jolly declared, "fer in a mighty sight less'n a week you'll be lifted in a muchly wuss way, that I kin tell yer now."

"You mean lifted with a rope, eh?"

"You bet! Thar'll be a reg'lar old-time necktie jollification at Honeysuckle, an' you'll wear ther tie."

"That is quite an honor, assuredly," remarked Dick.

"Et aire one thet you is welcome to."

"But, suppose I decline, with thanks?"

"That won't make no difference in ther case. You has got ter swing this time, an' thar won't be no gettin' out of et."

"There may be another friendly flood."

"Ef thar is, ther jail won't be in et, you bet, fer ther old one aire gone, slick an' clean."

"But, you will give me a fair trial, of course," Dick further debated.

"A fair trial nothin'!" cried One-ear Bob. "What on airth d'ye mean, anyhow?" he demanded. "Didn't ye hev yer trial, only yister-day? An' wasn't ther verdick ez plain ez et could be made? I opine thet you hev lost your mind."

"I haven't had any trial at all," returned Dick, to that. "I have been trying to impress it upon you that I am not the man you take me to be. But, you seem to know better than I do about it, so go ahead."

"An' which same you can't do, nohow," decided Mr. Jolly. "We knows yer too well, Mister Hen Wilburt, an' you can't come no sich simple game ez that over us. No, I shed sneeze up a frog ef ye kin."

"All right, all right, have your own way about it. Go ahead with the funeral, as I have several times invited you to do, and we'll see where the mourners will come in before we are done with the business."

"Yas, you bet we wull. We is goin' ahead, and a half hour more will see you in Honeysuckle."

After that the talk flagged, and they went on in almost silence.

Finally they came up out of the canyon, for the trail had been running upward all the time, along the canyon wall, and they found themselves upon a broad plateau, the canyon curving sharply away to the right.

They were here away up on the side of mountain, and at their feet was a beautiful little valley pocket.

It contained a town of some forty buildings,

all told, and over against the opposite wall was evidence of placer mining.

Most of the buildings were grouped together on the higher ground of the bottom, but there were signs of others that had stood lower down, but which had been swept out of existence by the recent flood.

"This hyar ar' Honeysuckle, Mister Wilburt," One-ear Bob informed, with a wave of the arm. "Bein's ye never sawn et afore," put in one of the others.

"Jest so," Bob accepted. "An' thar," pointing, "thar is whar the jail war, afore et war gone hence. An' thar," pointing in another direction, "thar is ther tree whar you'll most likely test ther strength of a lariat. We calls et Robin Kerdoon's lifter."

"And how do you get down to this enterprising burg?" Deadwood Dick asked.

"Yer is enough ter make us tired, you is," declared One-ear Bob, in a burst of disgust. "Jest ez ef you'd never sawn the place afore. Come erlong, an' you'll find out."

They started on, and when they had crossed the plateau, then Dick noticed a trail that wound down the slope on the northern side.

"Is this the only way out and in?" he asked.

"Yer tempts me ter kick yer clean to ther bottom, yer does," One-ear Bob growled. "Ef we knowed that secret way out, what you knows, d'ye s'pose that we'd come all ther way up hyar ter climb down ag'in?"

Dick felt more and more interest in the matter every moment.

He had had strange adventures before, and many of them, but this promised to be second to none.

To sum it up, he was mistaken for a man whom he knew to be dead. That man had been under sentence of death for the killing of another, whether innocent or guilty, and the flood had cheated the rope. He, it would seem, had known of some secret way out of the pocket. No one else knew where that way was. Then, the mystery of the eagle, and the note it had carried.

All this, with the other minor points added, was running through Dick's mind, when on looking up, he saw the eagle circling over the pocket, high in the air, as though searching below for some object it particularly wanted to find.

He had an interest in that bird, that he could not deny, but he did not pay much attention to it now, for reasons easily understood.

CHAPTER V.

IN A DESPERATE STRAIT.

It took considerable time more to get down to the bottom of the gulch, but they finally did, and Dick was led forward into the one street of the town, his captors wildly cheering.

"Hyar we is!" yelled out One-ear Bob. "Hyar we is, ther ten-toed terrors of all Arry-zone! An' we've got ther varmint what killed Dancin' Dave, too, you bet! Git out hyar, you lazy galoots o' Honeysuckle, an' see ther prize game-cock what went down in ther flood, and what didn't even lose a feather. Hustle out hyar, we say, an' toot yer bazzoos as ter what is ter be done with him."

The crowd was coming, and by the time the six men, with their prisoner, came to a halt in front of the one saloon of the town, there were fifty or sixty men on the spot.

Honeysuckle was a town that boasted an even hundred citizens. Which is to say, that had been its figure of population previous to the sudden demise of one Dancing Dave. Now the fold consisted of only ninety-nine.

There was one that had gone astray, so to say, and not so much that, either, as that he had been wafted over the range with a thirty-two caliber bullet for ballast.

He had been one of the worst eggs in the nest, had that same David, surnamed Dancing; but at the same time one of the most popular of the town's citizens. He had played the role of right bower to Robin Kerdoon, and he was boss of the roost.

Kerdoon was, as we have already learned, mayor of the place, and he was also the proprietor of the one saloon of the town, the "Bummers' Retreat," as it was most appropriately named.

The mayor soon appeared at the door of his saloon, a big, strong-looking man, with red hair and beard, and about the homeliest mortal that ever drew breath.

"Hillo!" he exclaimed, "what hev we hyar, boyees?"

"It aire the p'izen varmint what done it up fer Dave," was the response.

"So et aire! Where did yer light on ter him?"

"Up erlong ther Thin Man's Pass. He war headin' this way, too, an' pretends ter say thet he ain't Hen Wilburt."

Kerdoon broke out into a coarse laugh, that sounded more like the braying of a jackass.

"Yer kain't tell us that aire, yer know, me boy," he decided. "We knows yer too well. We'll lock yer up, and about midnight we'll give you a send-off thet will do ye proud, an' be a consolation to ye in ther long hereafter down below."

"I suppose you will give me a fair chance to prove that I am not the man you take me to be, won't you?" Dick asked.

"What's ther sense o' anything o' thet sort? Don't ye reckon we knows ye? Et don't make a powerful sight o' difference anyhow. Th' storm cheated us out of our fun last night, an' ther boyees will kick ef they don't have et ter-night. I reckon you is booked, Henry, me boy, even ef you have had a skeem to prove that you ain't yourself."

"That is hardly a square deal," Dick complained. "I can give you proof that will satisfy you, if you will let me."

"Oh, et don't much matter one way or t'other. You was headin' fer this camp, anyhow, the boyees tells me."

"Yes, I was, and does it look likely that I would come back here if I had just had a narrow escape from hanging?"

"Et might be jest like yer. But, that ain't to ther pint now. You was comin' hyar et is furbid, an' we'll have ter hang yer fer that. anyhow."

"Well, you are about the worst-looking gang of cut-throats, on the whole, I ever saw bunched together anywhere," Dick fired out. "Before you get done with this job, you may find out something that you don't know now, and it will pay you to bear it in mind. Go on with your funeral."

"Ef you don't keep a purty civil tongue," the mayor warned, "we may change our minds an' string ye up right now, without waitin' fer all ther boyees ter be on hand. Take him off, Bob, an' see see that he's locked up somewhars."

"We'll see that he don't git away," responded One-ear Bob, and he and another ruffian laying hold upon the prisoner, they dragged him away.

"Where to now?" Dick asked of them.

"We'll show you in about two minutes," was the only satisfaction he got by way of answer.

At the further end of the town, and a little apart from the general collection of buildings, was an unfinished log cabin. It had no roof, and there was no door or window in the places that had been provided for them.

Into this rude place Dick was led, and One-ear Bob looked around critically.

"Et wull do," he decided.

"But how wull ye fasten him?" asked the other fellow.

"I've got a chain an' lock down in my shanty," was the response. "Well put ther chain to his feet an' lock him fast to one o' these hyar bottom logs, an' all therimps from below couldn't git him out."

"That's jest ther stuff, an' I'll go fer ther lock an' chain now."

"Yes, go, an' while you're about et, tell ther boyees ter bring some boards ter nail up ther doors."

"All right, an' we'll soon be hyar."

The fellow started off, and One-ear Bob stood guard over the prisoner, a revolver in hand.

"I suppose you won't deny a fellow something to eat, will you?" asked Dick, in a rather conciliatory tone.

"Gettin' hungry, be ye?" Bob grunted out.

"Hungry as a bear," Dick declared. "Haven't had a toothful since yesterday, and I feel the want of it. Besides, I've got a hurt on my head that wants attending to, and if you, or any one here, will dress it, I won't forget the attention."

Bob looked at him a moment before replying.

"Yer say yer head aire hurted?" he inquired.

"Yes, look for yourself," Dick answered.

Bob removed Dick's hat and took a look at the wound.

"Et war done by a gun, sure ez sin!" he exclaimed.

"I know it was," said Dick.

"When war et done?"

"Some time before the storm last night."

"When you was still in ther jail? Git out," clapping the hat back on his head again, "you can't tell me that."

"Well, whether you believe it or not, will you get some one to see to the wound for me?"

"What's ther use? In a few hours you will be where a leetle hurt like that won't trouble ye

any, an' as fer yer bein' hungry, that don't matter either."

Dick turned away from the brute in disgust.

"I was willing to forget that I owe you two kicks," he said, "but now I'll add two more to the debt, so that it won't lack for interest."

Bob laughed, and pretty soon the other man, and more with him, came back, bringing the lock, chain, boards and so forth.

In order not to be roughly handled, when he knew it would avail him nothing, Dick submitted tamely, and let the men do with him as they would. His star of good luck seemed to be behind a cloud for the present.

The chain that had been brought was a heavy one, with short links, and one end of it was put around Dick's feet and secured there with the padlock.

There was, as One-ear Bob had said, little chance that he could get it off, even with help to do it.

That part of the work done, some of the mud plaster was knocked out from between the bottom log and the one next to it, and the chain passed through and made fast on the outside where it was entirely out of reach.

"Thar," cried Bob, when the job was completed, "I would like to see you git out o' that, me noble Hennery. Et would puzzle ther devil himself ter git away, I am a thinkin'."

"It looks as though I am booked to stay, and that's a fact," Dick agreed. "You can't most always sometimes tell what is going to happen next, though," he added, "and I may not materialize worth a cent when you come to look for me."

"We'll take ther risk o' that. Ef yer do git away, I'll perteshun ther mayor ter pardon ye, be gum!"

"If I do get away," warned Dick, grimly, "I will make things hum around here, and don't you forget it. I have got it in for you anyhow."

Some other hot words were exchanged, while the men were boarding up the place that was intended for a door, and when that work was done the men all went off to the Bummers' Retreat to "lubricate."

Deadwood Dick was left alone to his dismal reflections.

What strange freak of adverse fate had placed him in this ugly position? For it was certainly not one to be envied.

His long walk, lack of food, the night's exposure, and his wound, all taken together, made him miserable indeed. He felt that he was growing weak, and realized that if he had to spend the rest of the day without food he was likely to become really ill, to say nothing about his wound.

His hands were tied yet, as they had been, and now his feet were held firmly by the unyielding chain. He was sitting in the sun, too, for it was pouring in at the uncovered top of the unfinished cabin.

At one end was a narrow belt of shade, however, and he made up his mind to try to reach it, if the length of his chain would allow.

Moving along as best he could, he was just able to bring his head and shoulders into the shade, but no more, and there he threw himself down to rest, since there was nothing else he could do.

While he was lying there, on his back looking up at the hot, brassy sky, he saw something that gave him immediate hope.

It was a large bird, soaring slowly about over the town.

"The eagle!" he exclaimed.

At once he began to make effort to get upon his feet, and finally succeeded in doing so.

"Now is the time to test the meaning of this red lining in the dead man's hat," he thought. "But, how am I to turn the hat inside-out?"

He was puzzled to know, and at first it looked impossible.

But a plan soon suggested itself, and he set about putting it to the test. He rubbed his head against the logs till the hat fell off, and then he sat down with his back toward it and reached for it with his fingers.

After some effort he got hold of it, and then began the slow work of turning it as he wanted it, which was finally accomplished. And that done, he lay flat down, and, after a good deal of hard work managed to get the hat back upon his head. But even when it was there he was too tired to attempt to get up at once, and looking, he found that in the mean time the bird had disappeared from sight, and that his labor had been in vain so far as concerned the present.

"No matter," he mused, "it is done now, and if the bird does come again, I will be ready for it."

CHAPTER VI.

A FRIEND IN TIME OF NEED.

SOMETHING like ten minutes dragged wearily by.

Bristol watched patiently for the reappearance of the eagle.

At last it came, just as he was on the point of giving up looking for it, for the time being.

Back it sailed into his range of vision, easily and gracefully, and without a motion of wing so far as the watcher could discover.

Dick got upon his feet with all the haste circumstances permitted, and jumped out as nearly into the middle of the log-bound space as the chain would allow, and there stood and waited.

He continued to watch the bird, and was presently gratified to see it come to a sudden stop. It remained motionless for a few seconds, and then moved forward till it hung directly overhead. Then, of a sudden, down it shot, falling with a velocity almost too great for the eye to follow.

It was but a moment, and the great wings spread a shadow over the space within the unfinished cabin, and in another moment the huge bird settled down upon Dick's head.

Here was a new problem, then, to be solved.

How was he to get the eagle from his hat to the ground? For that, from the experience he had already had, he concluded, was the way it had been used to.

It was impossible now, however, so the next best thing had to be done instead. Dick leaned back against the logs, and slipped to a sitting position on the ground, when he rolled over and deposited the eagle beside him, hat and all.

He had expected, almost, to see the bird stretch its wings and leave him, but it did not do that. Instead, it stood still, and began winking as solemnly as it had done on the other occasion. And then for the first time he was able to notice what it had brought to him.

There was no longer any question about the hat signal, and the fact that the eagle was well-trained.

First of all to catch Dick's eye was a small, keen bowie-knife, which was suspended from the bird's neck by a cord. And then, more securely fastened, was a small package carefully folded and tied.

Dick gave attention to the knife first.

It was a godsend to him, and he appreciated the thoughtfulness that had put it within such easy reach.

Moving carefully to the eagle, watching for the least show of hostility on the part of the big bird, he presently got hold of the knife with his teeth and began to pull; then he gave a jerk and the knife was his.

"Good boy, Old Baldy!" he exclaimed in an undertone. "You have saved my life, I believe, and I am not ungrateful."

But, how was he to proceed next? The knife was his, but, how could he make the right use of it? What he wanted was to get his hands free.

He soon thought he had found the plan he was looking for, and ran his eyes along the logs behind him, or on the side where he was fastened.

"Eureka!"

So he exclaimed, as he found just what he was in search of.

There was a crack where some of the plaster had fallen out, and it looked to be about wide enough to admit the handle of the knife.

It was but a minute's work to test it. Taking the knife in his mouth again, the plucky detective got upon his knees, and after a few trials had the satisfaction to get the handle of the knife firmly fixed between the logs.

"So far so good," he muttered. "Now will it stay there till I can free my hands? By heavens! but they shall find that Deadwood Dick is not so easily downed. But I must not forget that I owe everything to the owner of this bird."

Getting upon his feet, he put his back to the wall and proceeded with the utmost care and caution to bring the cords that bound his wrists into contact with the keen blade.

The first trial was a failure. The blade swung around so that no pressure could be brought to bear upon it.

"I'll soon remedy that," mused Dick.

Making use of his jaws again, he took the knife out and replaced it with the edge of the blade downward, so that all the strain would come upon it in an upward pull, which would only tend to fix it the more firmly.

All this time the eagle stood silently by, seeming to pay not the least attention to what was going on.

Dick now brought his wrists into contact with the blade, again, to find that he had overcome

what had seemed an impossible difficulty, for, in a few moments, his hands were freed.

"Eureka!" once more he exclaimed.

Now to see what the eagle carried.

Taking the knife from the niche, he cut the cords that held the package to the bird's neck, and in the same manner opened it.

The first thing to claim his attention was a penciled note.

It was worded as follows:

"DEAR HENRY:—Thank God you are alive! But I know you must be in trouble of some sort. Are you a prisoner? If so, I send you the things I consider most useful. I send a knife loosely tied, so that you can easily get it, and in this parcel you will find paper and pencil. Let me know at once where you are. If you need further help you know you can trust me. Take care of Old Baldy, that he does not get shot, for that would be bad indeed for us. Answer. As ever, JACQUETTA."

Deadwood Dick was gratified, though puzzled. Who was this Jacquetta? And where was she? Certainly not far away. Was she the dead man's wife—now widow?

He did not know, but that was what he guessed. Anyhow, in her he had a true friend in his present need, and one of whom he must make use, even at the cost of the deception he had to carry on for the time.

But there was danger, and great danger, that the eagle might be seen and shot, and, as the note said, that would indeed be bad. Might he not keep the bird there till dark, before he let it go? But, no, for he was likely to be visited at any time, when discovery would be certain.

No, he must take all the risks, and the bird must return at least once more, bringing him something to eat.

He examined the contents of the package.

It contained, as the note said, paper and pencil. Besides, there were a dozen thirty-two-caliber cartridges.

But these latter were useless to Dick now, since the revolver he had had, had been taken away from him at the time of his capture, and there was no prospect of getting another.

Nevertheless, he stored them away in his pocket, for they were as good as gold, and a good deal better, too, under certain conditions. More than once in his adventurous career would he willingly have given a handful of gold for just one of the little jokers.

When the cartridges had been put away, he took up the paper and pencil, and began writing a message to the unknown.

It was presently done, and ran as follows:

"JACQUETTA:—That knife was just what I needed, for my hands were tied and I was about helpless. I am a prisoner at Honeysuckle, in the unfinished log cabin. A chain is around my feet, secured with a lock. Can you send a piece of stiff wire? I am about starved, too. Send, if you can, just a crust of bread and a little water. We must run the risk of the bird's being seen. I have been wounded in the head. Dare you venture here after dark, to help me away? I will need to be guided. Come well armed, for I have no weapons save the knife you sent. When you come, whisper your name, and I will know it is you. Use the utmost care, for you will be in danger."

There was no signature, and Dick had managed to run the message to the very bottom of the sheet, in order to crowd out room for a signature.

He knew that he was asking a good deal of his unknown friend, but, under the circumstances, what else could he do? He could not go to her, not knowing where she was, so she would have to come to him.

The message written, it was carefully folded and secured to the eagle's neck, and he was ready to send the bird back again.

But, how to start it? That was a secret he had yet to learn. He could only try again the experiment that had proved successful before, so putting on his hat, with the red inside, he picked up the bird and gave it a toss upward.

Immediately the huge wings were spread, and after a moment's hesitation away the eagle soared.

Dick listened, expecting to hear a shout as some one espied it, but nothing was heard.

So he concluded that it had got away unseen for that time, anyhow.

With his hands freed, he now set about seeing what could be done toward freeing his feet, too.

But he soon discovered that nothing could be done. He tried to draw his feet out of his boots, and so get free, but the chain had been too tightly drawn to admit of that. Nor could he turn the other end of the chain around the log, so as to get at that end of it. He was a prisoner still.

As there was nothing he could do, further, he laid his hat down on the ground, with the red-lined crown up, near the middle of the cabin,

and crawled as far into the shade as he could get, and laid down.

He fell asleep, there, and did not awaken for some time.

When he did awake, finally, it was to find the eagle had returned.

It was standing on his hat, where he had left it, and was winking as solemnly as ever.

Secured to its breast was a package of considerable size, and one that promised both food and drink to the prisoner.

Dick speedily crept over to the bird, and with his knife cut the cords that held the package in place, and proceeded to open it.

Again "Eureka!"

He found both bread and drink. There were two pieces of bread, good and wholesome, with a piece of cold meat between. And with it was a small bottle, containing some strong coffee.

Dick paid no attention to anything further until he had made away with these, when he began to feel like a new man at once.

Then he looked further into the package, bringing to light a small rat-tail file, a piece of wire, and a quantity of strong, cord wound into a ball.

Under other things was another note in answer to his.

It was in these words:

"DEAR HENRY:—You need not ask if I dare venture there. I will be with you as soon as it is dark. I will bring weapons, and if necessary we will fight to the death against those who have wronged us so bitterly. Keep up your courage, and be on the watch for me after dark. I will not fail you. As ever, JACQUETTA."

"God bless you, whoever you are!" Dick exclaimed. "If your wrongs are such as Deadwood Dick can make right for you, they shall be righted. But, I shall have a sad piece of news to break to you when we meet."

CHAPTER VII.

DICK GETS A CLEW TO HIS DOLLARS.

DEADWOOD DICK felt more cheerful.

And he felt better in every way, since he had had something to eat and drink.

He was on the point of sending the bird back at once, but on second thought he decided to try to free his feet first.

If he could do that, it would be a good piece of news to send to his unknown friend, such as he hated the part he was forced to play.

"But, she cannot blame me, when she comes to know all about it," he reasoned. "Any one else would have done the same under similar circumstances. And I intend to repay it all, if life is spared."

Taking up the piece of wire, he found that it would not answer his purpose, or at any rate he did not think it would. It was not stiff enough, but it was no doubt all the woman had had to send to him.

But the file gave him more hope. It would be no small task to file off one of the links of the chain, but it must be done, or—Ha! a new idea came to his mind just then. Could he not bend the slender tail of the file, and with it pick the lock?

He set about trying the experiment immediately. Putting the end into the lock, about half an inch, he pulled, and found that it bent readily enough, just as he desired to have it. He could not have found a better tool for the purpose, had it been made to order.

The lock was one of the old-style padlocks, which were not hard to pick open, even the best of them.

Dick inserted the novel key he had made, and after one or two efforts the lock was opened.

"Eureka!"

So the hero of a hundred exploits exclaimed.

The redoubtable Richard had every prospect for soon being himself again.

And then this "grandalucous" town of Honeysuckle, as it was termed in the notice posted by its worthy mayor, which had been the means of getting Dick into his present fix; then, this town was likely to be aware of his presence.

Dick penciled just a few brief words, then, and secured the papers to the neck of the noble winged messenger.

After that, he relocked the padlock on his feet, and put out of sight everything the bird had brought, and that done, he tossed the bird up in the air and set it off upon its return.

His precaution had not been without forethought.

Should any one see the bird, he reasoned, there might be an instant rush for the cabin, and his trick would be discovered.

He was wise enough to guard against that, and it was lucky he was, for barely had the bird risen above the logs of the cabin when a

shout was heard, followed by several revolver shots in rapid succession.

"Great cats!" was the exclamation that he heard shouted, "jest look 'e thar!"

And then followed the firing, and Dick looked after the eagle, expecting to see it come tumbling to the earth.

But he was joyfully disappointed, for the firing was wild, and with a very few strokes of its powerful wings the noble bird, emblem of freedom, was out of range and out of danger.

Other shouts were heard immediately, and a general barking of revolvers was heard on every side, but now it was altogether useless to fire.

"I'm blamed if that wasn't a narrow escape," Dick muttered. "That fellow must be a poor shot. He couldn't hit a barn on the wing. But, then, he has fired wildly, no doubt. No matter, though, for I'm only too glad they didn't hit. But, now I must get into shape for an interview, for they're heading this way."

So it was. A goodly portion of the crowd, headed by One-ear Bob, were bending their steps toward the cabin.

Dick dropped to the ground, with his hands behind him, and put on about as rueful a face as he could extemporize.

There was a hum of voices outside, and in a moment more a hammer was at work on the boards that closed up the entrance.

Some of these were soon removed, and One-ear Bob and three or four others put their heads through the opening.

"Hillo!" Bob exclaimed, "thar ye be, aire ye?"

"It isn't likely that you would find me anywhere else," responded Dick, gloomily enough.

"Haw! haw! No, I should opine not, me gallus kerdoodle, not with that aire big chain fast to yer hoofs. Was thet bird in hyar?"

"That buzzard, you mean?" asked Dick, innocently.

"Buzzard be durn!" cried Bob. "Et war a eagle!"

"The dickens it was! Yes, it flopped down here, but it went off again in a hurry. I took it for a buzzard that had come to see if I had starved to death yet or not."

"Haw! haw! No buzzard erbout that feller. Thet feller ar' a old timer round these parts, an' we calls him ther Hummin'-bird o' Honey-suckle."

"You've seen it before, then?"

"Why, yes, durn et, an' so hev you, too. Come, it won't be of any use fer you ter play off any longer, Hen Wilburt. We knows yer, an' thet settles it."

"All right, have your own way. You may find out, though, after you have hanged me, that you have made a big mistake. I can prove that I am not that man, if you will give me half a chance."

"Which we don't intend ter do. Ther mayor says et don't make much difference, anyhow, an' I reckon he's about right. You jest stay right whar ye be, like a good leetle boy, an' about midnight we'll send ye off ter kingdom-come, a-kitin'."

This elicited a coarse laugh from the crowd, and after a few more remarks of a like cheering nature, Mr. Jolly nailed up the boards again, and they all went off.

"Keep it up, my gentle cherubs," muttered Dick, with a meaning smile, when they had gone. "I will be with you, before many moons, and if there isn't fun on deck then, you can pen me up again, that's all."

The smile settled into a look of grim determination, such as boded ill for all who had had a hand in the matter against him.

And Deadwood Dick's threats were never idle. He generally meant business pure and simple, and most always "got there with both feet," as it is aptly expressed in the West, that land of quaint phrases.

By this time it had become evident enough that nobody was going to bring him anything to eat or drink, though he cared little for that now, but he was storing all these items up against the town, to repay them with interest when the day of reckoning should come.

Being free, now, the natural desire to get out of his prison came upon him. It was an easy matter, simply to climb to the top of the log structure and drop over; but, would it pay?

There were many objections to such a plan, and he concluded to remain where he was until night.

In the first place, he needed weapons. Then, he would certainly be seen, and if not recaptured, shot. But, while he was certainly daredevil enough to have risked all this, he knew that such a course would balk his meeting with his mysterious friend.

No, he would remain in limbo, and stick to the first plan.

So, unlocking the chain from his feet again, and putting the knife in a handy spot, so that he would be prepared for fight, if occasion required, he stretched out in the shade and once more went to sleep.

When next he awoke it was growing dark, and the town was becoming lively.

It is only when the heat of the day has passed, and the miners have washed up and had supper, that your Arizona town wakes up.

There was a good deal of loud talking going on, off in the direction of the saloon, and Dick soon made up his mind that he was going to be honored with another visit, for presently the noise of voices came nearer.

Laying the chain over his feet, and placing the lock so that it would appear that it was still locked, Dick leaned back against the wall of logs, holding his hands behind his back.

He was in about the same position as that in which he had last been seen.

"Oh! he aire thar fast ernough," cried one voice, as the crowd came near. "We has got him dead to rights, we has, you bet."

It was the voice of the mayor of the burgh.

"Yer kin bet yer life on et!" chimed in One-ear Bob. "Ther gallus ducklin' ar' ready fer ther rope ag'in, an' it will take suthin' wuss nor another flood ter save him this time."

"Wull, let's hev a look at him, anyhow," demanded another voice.

"Thet's what ye shell hev," assured the mayor. "Bob will knock off a board an' let yer feast yer eyes on ther p'izen galoot what killed Dancin' Dave."

One of the boards was soon off, and several evil-looking faces peered in at the prisoner.

"Still right thar, be ye, sonny?" observed One-ear Bob, mockingly. "Thet aire ar' right, me leetle man. You hold ther fort awhile longer, and after that we'll stow ye away in yer leetle bed, two by six."

"Have your own way about it," returned Dick, carelessly.

"Which same ar' about what we 'most allus does," retorted Mr. Jolly.

"Whar is P'izen Pete an' Bow-leg John?" demanded the mayor.

"Hyar we is," a voice answered.

"Wull, jest come an' look et ther cuss, both of yer, an' see ef et ain't ther right man."

"I'll know him soon's I sot eyes on him," another voice declared.

There was a stir in the crowd outside, and presently two faces of a most brutal type presented themselves at the opening.

They were even worse in stamp than most of the others.

And as Dick looked at them, returning their stare, something caught his eye that caused him a start.

The front of the brim of one man's battered broadbrim hat was pinned up, and it was held in place by a cluster of diamonds!

Dick recognized them immediately as his! Now he had a clew to the man, or to the men, who had laid him out and robbed him. And he stored their names away in his memory, as he had heard them called—P'izen Pete and Bow-leg John.

"Yas, yas, he's ther feller," cried he with the diamonds on his hat. "He is ther galoot that killed Dancin' Dave, sure's my name ar' Pete Piper."

"An' I kin surtyfy ter them facks," put in the other. "You has got him, you has, boyees, an' now fer ther grand juberlee. When aire et ter come off?"

"Oh, we'll have et later on, when ther lads git inter good trim fer et," the mayor decided.

"Yas, about midnight," added One-ear Bob.

"Has yer got anything ter say, pris'ner?" Kerdoon a ked.

"I'll toot my bazzoo later," Dick answered, sullenly.

The crowd laughed at this, and once more the opening was nailed up and they went off to the saloon.

Darkness came on apace, and Dick's jail was like a dungeon. It was lighted only with a faint glimmer that came from the peaceful stars. Over in the direction of the saloon there was a hum of voices that was growing louder and louder all the time.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE SKIN OF THEIR TEETH.

DEADWOOD DICK was growing impatient. Another hour had dragged by, and his friend had not come.

The noise over in the direction of the saloon had by this time grown to a wild uproar.

Dick knew that it was not likely that the crowd would put off their evil work till midnight. In fact, he now expected to hear them coming for him at any minute.

He was all ready to climb the log wall and leave the cabin at the first sound of alarm, but he did not want to go away until he had seen the mysterious Jacquetta, if possible.

Another hour passed, and by that time there was no mistaking the fact that the time for leaving the cabin was at hand. The wild uproar at the saloon had grown to a general drunken howl, and now the indications were that a descent was about to be made upon the cabin for the purpose of lynching the prisoner.

Dick resolved to wait no longer, and was just on the point of climbing the log wall when he heard a voice on the other side.

"Jacquetta!" was whispered.

It was the signal agreed upon with the unknown.

"All right," Dick responded, "I'll climb right over," and he lost no time in doing so.

In a minute more he dropped safely upon the ground on the other side, and in the very dim light could see the outlines of the woman near him.

"Henry!" the woman exclaimed, and with the word he was caught in her arms and a shower of warm kisses fell upon his face.

Naturally, this took him somewhat aback, but he understood that the expression of fondness was for another, and he made no show of returning it.

This the woman was quick to notice, and she drew away, demanding in an injured tone:

"Have you no kiss for me, Henry?"

"No, no," Dick whispered hastily, and with pretended great excitement, "the danger is too great. You do not know all. I have much to tell you when you have led me to a place of safety. See, the mob is coming! You must lead me, for I cannot trust myself."

It was true that the mob was coming.

Many of them bearing torches, and all singing some wild song, they were heading for the temporary jail, and were not a great distance away.

"Here are revolvers," said the unknown, hastily thrusting a pair into Dick's willing hands. "They are ready for service. I have one for myself. And now follow me, for there is not an instant to lose, and we have got to cross this open space right in front of them."

"Lead on," said Dick, "and trust me to follow. I cannot lead, for my head is sore and—"

He would have added "mind confused," but he was saved the little falsehood.

"Come!" the woman interrupted, and with a jerk at his arm she started and ran at her best speed across the open.

Dick followed at her heels, and noticed that she headed for the bare rocky wall on the south side of the gulch.

They had not gone half the distance when the crowd reached the log prison, and in a second, almost, the boards were torn down from the doorway.

And then arose a maddened howl, as the prison was seen to be empty.

"Gone!" screamed One-ear Bob.

And "Gone!" yelled all the crowd in wild chorus.

That there was a lively wail then does not need to be stated; it may be taken for granted.

"Whar in blazes aire ther cuss?" yapped One-ear.

"An' how in all p'izen did he git out?" demanded the mayor, who had come out with the intention of being master of ceremonies.

These demands, and others, reached the ears of the late prisoner and his companion, as they continued on toward the south side of the gulch at full speed.

There was a prospect for their getting away unseen, and only for a most unfortunate mishap, they might have done so. The mishap was, that the revolver held in the hand of the woman, all ready for use, went off.

The flash and report were seen and heard by the bloodthirsty mob, and with a whoop and a yell they turned their attention in that direction.

"We are in deadly danger now," cried Deadwood Dick.

"Follow me, straight on," was the response from the woman. "We shall escape them yet. It was an unfortunate accident, but we shall cheat them. Come on, and keep close."

"I am right here," Dick responded.

"It is strange you do not know where I am leading you. You ought not to be in doubt about your escape."

"You forget that I have been badly wounded:

but, that is not the chief reason. I will tell you all when we can stop to talk."

Ever with the yelling crowd pressing after them, they exchanged these remarks as they ran.

Bristol could have outrun the woman, but he could not lead the way, and had to regulate his pace by hers. Consequently the fast runners among the crowd were rapidly gaining upon them.

"How far have we got to go?" Dick asked.

"A hundred yards further will see us safe."

"Do your best, then, or we shall be overtaken yet. I do not want to fire if I can help it, for that will show them where we are."

"Don't shoot till you have to."

The woman was panting, now, but she was putting forth every effort, and in a few moments more the bald face of the rocky wall was reached.

Without a pause, scarcely, the guide clambered up a rough ledge for a dozen yards or so, and Dick following right after her, found himself soon upon a plateau of considerable size.

"We are safe now," the woman panted.

"Do you mean to say we can hold this place against such a horde?" Dick demanded.

"Not by any means, but here they will lose us. But, your voice, and your entire ignorance of this secret— Say, are you Henry Wilburt?"

"If you could see my face you would have no need to ask," was Dick's evasive response.

"And see your face I must, and will, before I lead you one step further."

As she said this she raised her revolver, and holding it close enough to the tried and true detective's face, so that by its flash she might see his features, she fired.

That shot brought another maddened yell from the mob, and a volley of pistol-shots and bullets came pattering spitefully against the rocks.

It was only by sheer good luck that the woman and Dick were not hit.

"That was a reckless thing to do!" exclaimed Dick.

"I realize it now," was the response. "I acted upon impulse, and without a pause to reflect what the result might be."

Both had dropped flat upon the plateau now, to escape the flying bullets that were still coming.

"Well, does the sight of my face convince you?" Dick asked.

"Yes, Henry, it does," was the response. "Come, now while they are not firing, and we will give them the slip."

"Lead on, and I'm with you."

There was a pause in the firing, and the foremost of the pursuers were actually climbing to the plateau.

The woman had caught hold of Dick's sleeve, and pulled him after her across the plateau, until they were stopped by the rocky wall at the rear.

For the life of him Dick could not imagine where the woman could lead him, where the others could not follow, for they were now right upon them. It looked as though she must be mad.

But there was method in her madness, as he soon came to know.

She led him along the face of the wall for a few steps, and then into a sort of natural niche. To the touch it was like a corner in a room, sharp in the angle, and with two walls spreading out.

"Push hard into the corner," the woman now whispered.

Dick obeyed her, and to his amazement the two walls parted, and let them pass through, swinging back again into place as soon as they had entered.

"We are safe now," the woman said, "so let us sit down here and rest. You will hear them howl in their baffled rage. But, do you not remember this way of escape now, Henry?"

"I do not remember it at all," Dick responded.

"It is strange. It must be your wound that has done it. How were you hurt? You did not tell me."

"I was shot."

"And by whom?"

"I do not know."

"Well, that may not be strange, perhaps. But, tell me, why were you imprisoned at Honeysuckle?"

"Because I was mistaken for another man," Dick answered.

"And who was the other man?"

"I will tell you that later," Dick evaded.

"He was accused of having killed one of the citizens of the town, I believe, but had escaped from them."

"Why not tell me all now, brother, while we rest?"

Ha! this was a point Dick had been wanting to get at. Now he understood the situation better. This woman, or girl, perhaps, for he had barely seen her face as yet, was the dead man's sister.

"I have something of greater importance to tell you first," he made reply. "Let us wait till we come where we can see each other as we talk."

"Well, I will do as you ask, but I cannot understand your strange manner toward me."

She had found his hand, and pressed it fondly. He did not return the pressure in any degree, but drew his hand gently away, saying:

"Wait, wait, for you may despise me more than you caress me now, when you come to know all I have to tell."

"Oh! what can you mean? Come, let us go on, then, for I cannot bear this terrible suspense. I half fear, after all, that you are not my brother. Assure me that you are, will you not?"

"I am your brother," Dick answered.

But he meant that he was ready to serve her as a brother. In her time of need, as he felt sure was soon to come.

"Thank heaven for your words!" she exclaimed. "Come, we will go on. Let the maddened devils out there howl all they will, they know not our secret, and cannot possibly do us harm now."

She had again taken hold of Dick's hand, and allowing her to retain it, Dick was led away into the darkness he knew not whither, and gradually the sound of the mob died away in the distance, and all was silence around him.

CHAPTER IX.

A BRIEF GLANCE BACKWARD.

BEFORE following Dick Bristol and his fair guide further, let us devote one chapter to the doings at Honeysuckle.

The population of that lively town has been stated. When they were all at home, and before the untimely departure of Dancing Dave, it had numbered just an even hundred souls.

Now there was one less, and according to the unwritten rules and regulations of the burgh, a stranger could be elected to the post of citizenship to fill the vacancy and keep the roll up to flush. But to gain that great honor the stranger would have to get two-thirds of the citizens to vote for him.

Now these rules and regulations had been gotten up and laid down chiefly by Robin Kerdoon, Dancing Dave, One-ear Bob, Bow-leg John, Pizen Pete and some others of the leading and most influential citizens of the place, who made it a point to uphold the dignity of the law at the point of the pistol. And so far they had succeeded in doing so with fair success.

Another point in the regulations was, that by an absence of thirty days, without leave, a citizen lost his rights, and could only be reinstated by a vote in the manner already set forth. And an absence of forty days was the limit, with leave or without, that being about the length of time required for Robin Kerdoon to send out and bring in the supplies for his saloon. If that had required fifty days, then undoubtedly fifty days would have been the prescribed time.

The first citizens of the town had been, according to their story, Kerdoon, Dave Doyle, Peter Piper, John Wolf, and about a dozen others. But somehow the story of the find had got away from them, and in a little while others poured in until the town numbered a hundred. And then it was that Kerdoon moved that a mayor be elected, naming himself for the office, and the town be run according to some sort of rule. He was elected, and then followed the making up of the by-laws, as they have been described and explained.

The little valley pocket was a veritable bonanza as a placer diggings, and it was patent to all that the greater the crowd the sooner it would play out, and the smaller each man's share would be. And as soon as this view of the matter was set forth by the newly elected mayor, it was voted on the spot that not another man should be allowed to anchor there, no matter who or what he was, or whence he came. And to put this law into practice, a strong guard was placed on the only known trail that led into the pocket, and new-comers were turned face-about as fast as they arrived. That is to say, it was so with one exception.

The exception was a young man who gave his name as Henry Wilburt. He appeared in the town one bright morning, and his coming seemed to occasion Kerdoon and the older citizens con-

siderable annoyance, though they claimed that they had never seen him before and did not know who he was. Wilburt, on the other hand, gave them the lie, told them that they had usurped his rights, and gave the worthy centurion, the mayor, notice that the valley must be vacated in one month. Of course he was laughed at. Kerdoon sent for the captain of the guard, and demanded to know why he had allowed the stranger to enter the valley. The guard was amazed, and vowed that no one had passed his men. And the young stranger upheld him in the assertion.

But he refused to tell how he had come into the pocket, and the guard was ordered to turn him out, and he was warned never to let his face be seen there again. But, next day, lo! there he was again; and he continued to appear at different times during the days that followed.

At last Kerdoon and his gang tired of this, and warned him that next time he showed his face there he would be shot on sight, and if nothing else would stop him, it was altogether probable that that would.

Said one man:

"Thar is great wirtue in cold lead, me lad, an' ef ye value yer life, et wull pay yer ter heed this hyer warnin'."

But Wilburt did not take heed. A few days later he was in town again. And then it was that the mayor rose up in all the dignity of the powers in him vested, and ordered the young man's arrest.

It was one thing to order, however, and quite another to carry the orders into effect, as it was soon found. Wilburt saw that business was meant, and struck a bee-line for the south side of the pocket, where he clambered up to a small plateau.

It was just about dusk, when there was yet enough light to see objects, but not enough to make the aim of any but expert marksmen certain. The young man was called upon to surrender and "come down out o' that," but he only laughed at the crowd in response. A volley was fired at him, and he fell. It was thought that he was killed, sure enough. But, when the leaders of the pursuers had climbed to the plateau, there was no sign of the young man there, nor was there a mark of blood to show that he had been hit. Instead, a mocking laugh came to them from some unknown direction.

Then it was known that there was some secret way out of the pocket, a way of which no one save young Wilburt knew the secret. And the wise men of the pocket put their heads together to learn that secret at any cost.

It was decided that a man should be stationed near the plateau, the next time Wilburt put in his appearance, and that he should be run out of town the same as before. Then the man at the plateau could watch and learn how he got away.

It was a pretty scheme, and it ought to have worked, but it didn't. Things in this world don't always work according to expectations.

In a day or two Wilburt was seen again, and when he had been allowed the freedom of the town for an hour or so, the crowd got after him.

It was growing dark, as on the other occasion, and it seemed as though that hour was a favorite one with the young man. The crowd took after him with a rope, with wild threats of lynching, and Wilburt took to his heels and made for the plateau with a good deal of haste.

But, just as he was crossing the plateau, he espied a man in the shadows, and whipping out his revolver, he fired, and fired to kill, for he had noted that the other fellow had a weapon already in hand.

His shot struck home, but was not immediately fatal, and with a snarl of rage and pain the man sprung out upon him.

It was Dancing Dave, and having dropped his revolver when hit, he threw himself upon Wilburt to hold him, at the same time shouting to his comrades to hurry to his assistance.

Wilburt tried hard to break away, but did not succeed, and in the struggle the pair fell over the edge of the plateau and down into the gulch.

When Wilburt came to, after the fall, he found himself in jail. Next day a funeral jubilee was given in honor of Dancing Dave, and on the day following, the prisoner was given an apology for a trial, and sentenced to be hanged on the following night. But then came the storm, followed by the flood, and away went the jail and the prisoner with it.

Such, in brief, was the case, and that was the situation of affairs when our Deadwood Dick made his debut and found himself mistaken for another man.

Naturally, the citizens of Honeysuckle were

disappointed, when cheated of the "fun" they had been looking forward to.

They were about as villainous a set of rascals, to a man, as were ever banded together, and a "hanging-bee" was prime delight to their debased and brutalized minds, and they had planned to make the occasion an all-night's jubilee.

Of course they believed that Wilburt was dead, but to make sure they had sent out a party to look for his body, or at least some evidence of his death. And what was the delight of that party, headed by One-ear Bob, when their escaped prisoner, as they took Deadwood Dick to be, walked right into their arms.

The showing of delight with which they escorted him into Honeysuckle, has been shown in a previous chapter.

All through the long hours of that day, while Dick was confined in the unfinished log cabin, the worthy citizens were planning what a jollification they would have when the proper hour came.

The proper hour, according to the way of looking at it, was when the absent members of the flock returned, as most of them were expected to do that night, and when the heat of the day was over and their spirits had been properly braced for the full enjoying of the treat.

As the afternoon waned, the absent prospectors and others began to arrive, and along toward night came two villainous-looking fellows in whom we have an interest.

Their names have been mentioned. They were Peter Piper and John Wolf, better known as Pizen Pete and Bow-leg John.

They announced their arrival with a whoop and a yell, as they bounded into the Bummers' Retreat.

"Hyer we be," they yelled, "ther two on-tamed cattymounts of ther town of Honey-suckle!"

An answering cheer welcomed them, and then as the eyes of the crowd turned upon them, exclamations of wonderment began to be heard.

Pizen Pete had the front brim of his hat pinned up, and it was held in place by a cluster of diamonds. Bow-leg John wore a similar cluster on the front of his flannel shirt. Both wore ten-dollar gold coins on their coats in lieu of buttons, and they were further garished with bands of gold dollars on their hats, vests, sleeves and elsewhere.

"Great horned toads!" exclaimed the mayor, his eyes bulging out with amazement at the sight, "whar did ye strike et? Whar hev you two cusses been anyhow? Et hits me hard thet ye hev found a bonanz."

"A bonanz!" cried One-ear Bob, in disdain. "Et aire more like et ar' a reglar mint!"

The two gorgeously arrayed fellows laughed, enjoying the excitement and envy they had created.

"You is right, One-ear," Pizen Pete declared; "et war a mint, an' no mistake erbout et. Et war like two mints combined. Jest cast yere eye on this hyer."

He drew out a fistful of bills as he spoke.

"Yas, an' on this hyer, too," echoed Bow-leg. And he made a similar display of wealth.

"Great Susan Jane!" gasped Mr. Kerdoon, "et aire good for sore eyes, an' thet ar' a fact. But, whar hev you been?"

"Wull, we have been 'tendin' a hoss sale, latterly," explained Pete.

At this the fellows both laughed.

"An' after ther sale, we dervided up ther stakes," added John.

And this made them laugh again, heartier than before.

"Et hits me hard thet you two cusses hev been out on the road, playin' a game o' han's-up-an' pass-over," One-ear Bob declared.

"You has hit et, be gum!" acknowledged Pizen Pete. "But et war bigger game nor what ye might think. We held up the Express on ther railroad, an' went through ther hull dern crowd."

This statement caused more amazement than ever, and was the story to which the two rascals held.

They invited the whole town up to the bar at their expense, and the next half-hour was full of especial interest to that villainous assemblage of roughs and toughs.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECEPTION DISCOVERED.

THE new arrivals having told the story of their adventures while absent from the camp, as best suited their ends, were told, in turn, all about the killing of Dave Doyle by Henry Wilburt, and what had followed.

"What!" screamed Pizen Pete, "yer don't mean ter tell me thet Dancin' David ar' defunct, do yer? Oh! somebody hold my hat while I howl! Somebody hold me head till I do some tall weepin'!"

"Dancin' Dave killed?" echoed Bow-leg John; "et kain't be true."

But, true it was; there was no getting around that fact.

"An' what's ther wu't of et," went on the mayor, "ther cuss now sets up an' tells us thet he ain't Wilbur et all."

"Ther dickens he does! Wull, jest let me hev a peep at him," cried Pete, "an' I'll soon settle that p'int fer ye."

"Same here!" shouted John. "Let me look inter his eye oncet, an' I'll proclaim ther truth of ther case to yer."

"Oh! we has got him dead ter rights, no doubt erbout that part of et," said One-ear Bob.

"Yas, but we wants ter see him anyhow," persisted Pete.

"Yer bet we does!" shouted John.

"We'll try a few shots at his kerkiss, an' see—"

"No yer don't, boyees, none o' thet," the mayor interrupted. "We is savin' him over fer a grand old necktie party ter-night. Yer mustn't go fer ter sp'ile ther fun, or ther boyees wull howl fer gore."

"Bet yer life we wull!" chimed in the crowd.

"Oh, well, ef thet aire ar' ther programme," agreed Pete, "we don't do nothin' ter upset yer plans. But, let us hev a look at ther cuss."

"Yes, but yer won't git mad an' shoot?"

"No, no, honor bright we won't."

As if such a thing as honor were known to any of them!

"Well, then, we'll let ye see him," the mayor agreed.

"Are he so's he can't give ye ther slip?" inquired Bow-leg.

"Yer kin gamble high on that," assured One-ear Bob. "Ef he can ontie his two hands from abind his back, an' chaw off a big chain thet aire locked around his two feet, an' fastened to ther bottom log of ther cabin, then he kin git out."

"Ef thet aire ar' ther case, he's goin' ter stay thar. Whoop-ee! but we'll be on hand at ther hangin'; hey, John? An' we'll make old Rome howl, you bet we wull. Et wull be a send-off sich as he don't deserve, an' that I'm sayin' with a full head o' steam on."

There was a great deal more of such brag and boast, as they made their way to the cabin where Deadwood Dick was imprisoned, and when they came there the two fellows were allowed to look in at the prisoner, as has been shown.

After they went b ck to the Bummers' Retreat, they began from that hour to get themselves in proper trim for the coming event, and when, later on, they all set out for the temporary jail, they were well primed for any hellish work that might suggest itself to their blunted minds.

But, when they opened the jail, and found that the prisoner was gone— Well, there arose a maddened howl, as we have already described it, such, perhaps, as Honeysuckle had never heard before.

From that time till Deadwood Dick and his fair guide disappeared from the plateau, the movements of the maddened crowd have been chronicled.

Among the first to reach the plateau were Kerdoon, One-ear Bob, Pizen Pete and Bow-leg John, and as they flashed their torches around and found that the plateau was deserted, they howled once more.

There was, by the way, no other means of getting to or leaving the plateau, besides that by which they had come.

"Whar in blazes be they?" cried the mayor.

"Who was ther woman?" demanded Bow-leg.

"I gev et up," declared One-ear Bob. "Et must been her as helped him out."

"Of course et war," agreed Pete. "But, whar be they now?"

"Jest like we told yer," reminded the mayor, "thar is a secret way out o' this pocket thet only that cuss knows."

"Et looks like et."

"An' et is fer us ter find et!"

So cried Bow-leg John.

"Which same aire easier said than done," the mayor answered.

"We hev locked already," One-ear further explained, "an' et ar' no use. Et kain't be found. They is jest gone, an' thet aire ar' ther last of 'em."

"Ef et wur only ground hyer, so's we ked see ther trail," whined Pizen Pete.

"But, et ain't," reminded the mayor. "Et ar' rock, ez clean an' hard ez flint. Not a mark ter be seen on et."

They spent an hour there, searching over every inch of that plateau, and trying the sound of the rocky wall in every direction, but the secret they did not discover.

They were baffled, and knew it, and during that whole hour they made the air have a tendency toward blueness and sulphur with their mad cursings.

But, they were obliged to give it up at last, and made their way back to the Bummers' Retreat, very much chagrined.

There were worse things in store for them than that disappointment, however, had they but known it.

And now to return to the fugitives.

Deadwood Dick followed his guide without question.

He knew there was nothing to fear in the way of treachery. He could not have been safer in the care of his own mother, so far as this woman's, or maiden's, intention was concerned.

She believed him to be her brother, as now he knew, and her outburst of affection at their first meeting had shown what her love for her brother had been.

No, he had nothing to fear for the present, but what would it be when he came to break the terrible truth to her?

She led him for a considerable distance over the hard, rocky floor, but at length she began to move slower, as though using more caution for some reason.

At length she came to a sudden stop, and held him back.

"Stop! for your life!"

So she exclaimed as she held his hand in a firm grip.

"Stop it is," responded Dick. "What is the danger? Can you see in the dark as well as in the light?"

"You know that I cannot, surely. But, do you not remember this place yet? I am at the rope, and another step would mean death to us both."

"It is all new to me," Dick had to admit. "I am like a babe in your care, almost, here," he remarked.

"Well, here at our feet is a deep rift in the rock floor, with a ledge only about a foot wide around it," the fair guide explained. "You yourself put the rope up, so that no accident could happen. Don't you remember?"

"It is all new to me," Dick declared.

"And that rope runs on around, drawn close to the wall, to serve as a guide in making the dangerous passage."

"A good idea, decidedly," Dick approved.

"And still you do not remember the place."

"It is as though I had never been here."

"Strange. But come, pass your right arm over the rope, and we will go on."

"All right; it is done."

"You have got a good hold?"

"Yes; if the rope is secure, I am."

"You can trust the rope. Now, come on, keeping as close to the wall as you can. I will go ahead."

"Look out for yourself," said Dick, "and have no fear for me."

His guide started, and Dick followed after.

For a hundred feet or more they progressed, when the end of the rope was reached.

"We are safe now," the guide announced, as she let go and stepped away.

"Are we past the chasm?" Dick asked.

"Yes, by a dozen feet, or more. Now, give me your hand again, and I will lead you home."

"There ought to be handy means for making a light, in a hole like this," Dick remarked, as they went along.

"We have torches just ahead here," the girl answered. "I took one with me, when I went the other way, but it was such a poor one that I threw it into the rift as soon as I reached the other end of it. You see, I was counting on the one you had taken with you. But we came in in such haste, and as you did not remember anything, I did not think it worth while to ask you about it."

"And you were quite right, too," responded Dick. "I never held a torch in this place in my life, that I am aware of!"

"Strange, strange, and your voice, too, it— But you have suffered, and are perhaps worse hurt than you think. We must hasten."

They pushed along until presently they arrived at a point where the fair conductress made another stop.

"Here is a torch," she said; "now we shall be able to see our way."

In a few moments the flicker of a match was seen, and soon after the torch began to give out its brighter light.

Deadwood Dick welcomed the light, for he wanted to see the face of his unknown friend.

When he did see it he gave a start of surprise. It was about as fair a face as he had ever looked upon. The owner was not a day over eighteen, her features were regular, her skin tinted like peach, and her eyes were large, black and bright.

Dick was able to note this much while she was blowing the torch to make it burn more freely, and as soon as she had got the pine fairly ablaze she held it up and returned the compliment.

She looked steadily in Dick's face for fully half a minute, studying him well, and at the end of that time she grew pale and staggered back against the wall of the cavern, gasping:

"Good heavens! you are *not* my brother, though you are clad in his clothes. I *know* you are not he. What does this mean? Speak!"

Deadwood Dick saw that the truth was known to her.

The time for explanation was come.

CHAPTER XI.

A PLEDGE OF HONOR.

FOR a moment Dick did not speak; he was trying to think how best to break the news.

"Speak!" came again the imperative command. "Why are you silent?"

"I am studying how I ought to make certain things known to you," Dick replied, meditatively.

"You need not stop to study long how to answer *one* question, sir. Where is my brother? Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, I know where he is," slowly, solemnly.

"And where is he? Tell me! oh! tell me, and break this terrible suspense."

"Will you not wait until we have proceeded further? Until we have come out of this terrible place, where we can talk at—"

"No, no!" she interrupted, "I will not wait one minute. Tell me instantly, sir, where is my brother?"

"Well, if you will know the truth now, he is—"

"Not dead! Oh! do not tell me that!"

"God help you, he is dead!"

With a wild, piercing scream, the girl threw up her arms and fell backward, and only for the ready hands of Dick, would have struck with force on the rocky floor.

"Poor child!" Dick muttered, "it is a sad blow for her, no doubt."

He laid her gently down, and then picked up the torch that had dropped out of her hand.

For a moment he stood idle, reflecting what he should do now, looking well around in the dismal cavern in which they were.

In one direction was the way over which they had just come, and in the other lay the course they had been making, while on both sides and overhead were only the hard, bare rocks.

"This must come out somewhere," Dick meditated; "so I'll pick her up while she is unconscious and carry her. If I can get her out of this dismal place before she comes to, so much the better."

Sticking the torch for a moment into a crevice, he lifted the girl in his arms, and then recovering the light, started on up the unknown and ascending tunnel-like cavern, knowing not what might lie ahead.

He traveled a considerable distance in this manner, and at last felt a warmer current of air strike his face.

"I am coming out somewhere," he decided. "The air outside is naturally warm to what it is in here."

And his reasoning proved true. He soon came out under the starry vault.

Here he stopped to listen and look around, before going further, for he had no appetite for further danger just now; but, not a sound was to be heard. The place was as silent as the cavern from which he had just emerged. On all sides were the black outlines of hills.

While he stood there, he fancied he saw a faint light some distance ahead, and looking to make sure, decided that he was not mistaken. But, would it be policy for him to go to it?

While he hesitated, the girl in his arms sighed, and he knew she was coming to.

He laid her quickly down, and a moment later she opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked, excitedly.

"You are with one who will be your good friend," Dick answered.

"One who will be my good friend? Are you not— Oh! you told me he is dead!" and she was upon her feet in an instant.

"Yes, I told you he is dead," Dick affirmed, sadly.

"But, you lied to me, then! You said *you* were my brother!"

"I did that to keep back the cruel truth for a time," Dick explained. "Nor was it altogether a falsehood, for with the words I vowed to myself that I would be a brother to you, through thick and thin, and avenge for you Henry Wilburt's death."

"But, you have on his clothes! How is that? How did he die? Was it not he that sent me the messages to-day?"

"No, it was not he, but I. He was drowned in the storm last night. But, let me assist you to your home, or place of shelter, and there I will tell you everything. I owe my life to you, and you may not fear to trust me as implicitly as you would trust your own brother."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Dick Bristol."

"I never heard of you, sir, and yet how much like my poor brother you look."

"And it was that resemblance which came near costing me my life, and only for you, undoubtedly would. But, again let me assure you that I am your friend, and that if it is in my power to fill in any measure a brother's place, I stand ready to fill it."

The poor girl burst into a flood of tears, as the full force of her great loss came upon her, and she realized her helpless condition.

Dick stood patiently by, waiting for her grief to spend its force.

"But, you deceived me," she still insisted, when she spoke next. "See how—how you allowed me to greet you, and—"

"Stop," said Dick, gently. "I know to what you refer. It was not my fault, it was so sudden. But, if you remember, I made no like return. You mistook me for another, which I of course knew."

"But why did you use such deception at all? Why did you allow me to think that you were Henry when you knew he was dead? You have only added to the severity of the awful news you have brought me."

"My life was at stake," Dick offered in excuse, "and I saw no other plan. It seemed to me that the hand of Providence was in it almost. I would do the same thing again, under like circumstances. But once more let me impress upon you that I now am ready to prove to you all that I have pledged."

"You mean that, honestly?"

"Indeed I do."

"Are you willing to swear, on your honor, that you will take my brother's place, so far as you, a stranger, can, and carry out a righteous warfare that he and I have begun against our enemies?"

"Is justice on your side in the matter? Are your enemies those human devils at Honeysuckle?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then on my honor I do so swear."

The girl stepped forward and gave him her hand.

"I trust you," she said, simply. "If you betray my trust, may God deal with you according to your deserts."

"So be it!" responded Dick, and their hands met for a moment in a firm clasp.

The girl had now fully recovered from her faint, and taking the torch from Dick, she said:

"Follow me, and I will lead you to my temporary shelter."

"Will not our light be seen?" Dick questioned.

"It is not likely to be. It is next to impossible for any one to get into the place. At any rate, it is so difficult that no one would be likely to try it."

"How is that?"

"You see it is hemmed in all around by high walls. On the side where the trail is that leads to Honeysuckle, is a steep descent into a deep gulch. Around the other sides it is but little better."

"Then how came you to discover the spot, and locate here?"

"My poor brother discovered the secret way into the pocket from Honeysuckle, and from this side found another way out, a way that he would never have attempted to come up from the other side, not knowing such a place lay here to welcome him. But, now the other way is possible, since he made it so."

"I understand. Your brother, then, was the discoverer of the diggings at Honeysuckle?"

"No, but our father was. I will tell you all about that later, though, when we come to our destination."

"All right, I will wait."

"But, first, you must tell me your story."

"And I am quite willing to do that."

As they went on, Dick saw that he was being led toward the faint light he had seen after they had emerged from the cavern, and when, finally, they came to it, it was found to be within a small cavern that opened out into the pocket. It was the flame of a candle, standing on a rude, home-made table, and gave out light enough to illumine the place so that Dick could survey it as soon as he stepped within.

In one corner hung a curtain, that a correct guess led him to decide shut off the sleeping-place of the fair Jacquetta. There were some boxes, a home-made chair or two, a camp stove and some cooking utensils, and a chest.

That about summed up the entire fittings of the temporary abode.

"You left your light burning," Dick observed.

"Yes, I left that for Old Baldy, when he returns."

Dick had forgotten the eagle for the moment, and now noted that the bird was not there.

"And where is he?" he inquired.

"I sent him over to a point on the railroad, where we have friends, and from where we were looking for a party to come to our help very soon. I told them of your danger, supposing you to be poor Henry, you know, and urged them to hasten."

"I see, I see. That bird is a noble creature, and quite a marvel among the fowls of the air. It is a wonder he has not been killed. He is called the Humming-bird of Honeysuckle, over at the town."

"Yes, so they have named him. He seems to bear a charmed life. He has been fired at—well, I was on the point of saying a thousand times. He has never been hit, though, except once, when a feather was knocked out of one wing. You see he was always generally further off than those who shot at him calculated on when they fired."

"Yes, being so big, his appearance in the air is deceiving."

"Well, now for your story, Mr. Bristol."

"You shall have it. Last night, before the storm, I was riding through a gulch some miles from here. Somebody shot me, giving me the painful wound my head now bears. I knew nothing of it then, however. When I came to, I was lying on the trail, robbed, and very weak and dizzy, and a flood of water was sweeping past me. I realized what had happened, but soon fainted. When next I came to it was daylight, and the sun was looking in upon me. The flood had all gone, and the gulch was about as it had been before. I got up and looked around me, and found that my clothes were cut up so that they were hardly fit to cover a tramp. But they were all I had, and I was about to set out for some place, the nearest I could find, when I made a discovery. In the bottom of the gulch lay the body of a man."

"And that man was—" But the fair girl burst again into tears.

"You guess the truth," said Dick. "It was your brother."

CHAPTER XII.

JACQUETTA'S STORY.

DEADWOOD DICK waited.

He respected the bereaved one's grief.

Nor did he proceed until she had become calm, and told him to go on.

"Well," he resumed, "I went down to where the body lay, and examined it. The idea came to me that here I could get a change of clothes—Yes, it no doubt sounds revolting to you, but I knew not the man, and my condition was desperate. I took his garments and put them on, throwing mine away, or rather cramming them into a crevice in the rocks."

"And was there a mark on the dead man's arm?" the girl asked.

"The letters H. W. were on his arm."

"Alas! my last hope. It was indeed Henry!"

"There can be no doubt about that. Well, I buried the poor fellow there in the gulch, and then resumed my journey on foot. I was weak and hungry, and my wound was sore, but I had to press on, for it meant death to remain there. Finally I came to a place where I found a notice warning all men to keep away from the town of Honeysuckle, and the spirit of adventure rose up in me at once and I set out without any delay for that town."

"On the way, your eagle appeared, and swooped down upon me. I tried to shoot it, but the revolver I had only snapped. Then the bird swooped down and alighted on my head."

"And so Dick went on, telling all that has been made known to the reader, of his morning's adventures, as well as of all that had followed.

"And now," Dick asked, as he finally concluded his narration, "do you blame me, Miss Wilburt, for the course I adopted?"

"I do not," was the free, full answer. "In fact, I do not see how you could well have taken any other. It was the only thing you could do. I knew that the handwriting of the notes you sent was not like Henry's, but I considered that they were written under difficulties. Many things made me suspicious, but I found a ready excuse for everything. Love is full of such excuses, you know, when every hope hangs as by a hair."

"Yes, I know. I understand it all, I understood it all then. And now for your own story, if you are ready."

"I am ready, and certainly willing, to tell you all."

"Then please go ahead."

"I will. My name, as you know, is Jacquetta Wilburt. My mother died some years ago. My father was a miner, and an honest man, though poor. My brother was all that is good and noble, and he and I were like one."

Her voice failed, and she wept afresh.

"It was our father who discovered the rich diggings at Honeysuckle," she soon resumed. "He brought a pocketful of the nuggets to Prescott, where our home was, and turned them into money. He told no one where his find was, but me and Henry. He laid in a store of provisions, tools, and so on, and one night we three set out for the new find, where we intended to hide ourselves until we had amassed a fortune for us all."

"We used all possible secrecy, but it was evident afterward that we were followed. And that, too, by a man who had seen father display his gold at the place where he exchanged it. His name was Robin Kerdoon, and he is now mayor of the town, and the ringleader of the band of cut-throats that dwell there."

"I have seen the fellow."

"Well, we came to the valley, got our things all moved in, and father and my brother started to build the log-cabin in which you was imprisoned. They had it only about half done, when one night about a dozen men came down upon us, and all three of us had to fight for our lives. At first we beat the fiends off, but father had received a bad wound in the first part of the fight, and Henry decided that we had better get away while we could."

"He had before this discovered the wonderful secret way out of the pocket, and hastily getting what gold had been mined, and some provisions, we left the pocket by that way, bringing father with us. We came here to this cavern, and here, next morning, our poor father died. But before he passed away he pledged Henry to the oath that he would drive out the thieves and reclaim his rights."

"Henry and I both promised to do that, and from that hour began to lay our plans. That was some months ago. We went away, and about a month ago returned here to begin our warfare against the town. Henry went into the town, and warned Kerdoon and his followers that in one month they must be out of the valley or suffer the consequences if they refused. They laughed at him and ordered him away, warning him not to appear there again."

"But he did appear again, and several times, for, knowing the secret way, he felt that he could escape them at any time. And finally he was warned that he would be shot down at sight if he did not keep out of town. I wanted him to keep away, after that, but he was headstrong and would go, and went. They tried to capture him, but he escaped by the secret passage, though he had a hard run and close call that time, for they were right at his heels."

"After that I did not want him to go any more, but he insisted that he could get away as easily again, and went. Poor Henry, it was fatal. That was the last time I ever saw him, and it was his last visit. From the story you have told, it seems that he killed a man while trying to get away, or so I look at it, anyhow, and failing to escape, he was in danger of being hanged. He was locked up, but the flood freed him, only to claim his life in the end. Poor Henry, poor Henry!"

"That seems to be about it," agreed Dick. "We cannot get at the particulars, all of them, till we can force the story out of some of those rascals at the muzzle of a revolver. But, tell me, what was your brother's plan? How was he going to oust the usurpers from his ground?"

"It seems cruel, but the plan was the only one he could think of, and it is one that certainly promises success, if carried out. I have told you that he had warned the rascals they must

be out of the pocket at the end of one month. In a day or two that month will be up. Then, were they not out, it was my brother's intention to station himself on the high point yonder," pointing out at the towering peak of one of the rocky walls, "and from there to throw hand-bombs into the town until he had demolished every building in it."

"Excellent!" cried Dick. "Just what they deserve. But, where would he get the bombs? Have you got them here?"

"They have been sent for, and are no doubt on the way. When Old Baldy returns we shall no doubt have word of them."

At that moment something stirred the air, causing the candle to flutter, and a dark object dropped softly down before the mouth of the cavern.

Deadwood Dick was upon his feet at the instant, with revolvers drawn, but he saw at once what it was, as the tame eagle walked proudly into the place and stopped in front of Jacquetta.

"The mention of his name brought him," Dick observed.

"So it would seem," responded the girl. "I will see what word he has brought from our friends."

She quickly took a note that was attached to the bird's neck, and spreading it out, read it first to herself, and then aloud.

It was as follows:

"DEAR JACQUETTA:—Sorry to hear that Henry is in trouble. We set out immediately to come to your help. We bring the supply of death-dealers with us. Now the mine will soon be restored to you; that I can safely promise. We are three in number, and we will make it interesting for the rascals. Keep up your courage. We know the trail to Lone Pine Fork, but there you will have to meet us. Unless you do, it is not likely that we can find you."

"Faithfully, DICK PRINCETON."

"You will see by that," the girl remarked, as she stopped, "that he is bringing the supply of bombs."

"And who is this Dick Princeton?" Deadwood Dick inquired.

A blush that mounted suddenly to the pale cheeks told the tale.

"He—he is a friend of my brother's and—mine."

"I understand," said Dick, without hesitation.

"And our first business," the girl went on, "is to meet these friends and conduct them to this place."

"Exactly. Do you know where this mentioned Lone Pine Fork is?"

"Yes, it is the place where you saw Robin Kerdoon's notice posted on the tree. We will set out for there about noon to-morrow."

"Very well; it shall be as you suggest. But, as I have some interest in this town, outside of your case, no attack must be made upon it until I have paid it a visit. The men who shot and robbed me are there, and I must square accounts with them."

"The whole affair shall be under your charge, Mr. Bristol, for I know that you are fully capable of bringing it to a right issue."

"I have the conceit to think that I am, anyhow," Dick declared. "And they will find that Deadwood Dick is—"

"What! You Deadwood Dick!"

"Yes, since I have let it slip, I am he. Have you heard of me?"

"My brother knew of you, and more than once I heard him wishing that he only had your help!"

"Well, I am the man, and what I am able to do shall be done heartily for you and your cause. No doubt we shall be able to drive the rascals out of the pocket and restore your rights to you."

Further talk was had, but it need not all be set forth.

After a time the eagle was fed, when it retired to roost on a stick near the entrance to the cavern, as though on guard. Then the young girl bade Dick good-night and went to her bed behind the curtain, while Dick stretched out on another bunk that had belonged to the dead brother.

For a long time Dick heard the poor girl weeping, but finally all was still, and the next he knew it was morning and the sun was looking in.

He sprang up, without any noise, and listened. Hearing the regular breathing of the girl whose guest he was, and knowing that she was all right, he took up his hat and went out of the cavern and turned his steps in the direction of the peak to which she had pointed in the evening.

Hearing something following him, he looked, to discover that it was the eagle.

Dick allowed it to come, but he walked too fast for the bird, and presently it rose and was soon high in the air, where it hovered over him as he proceeded.

There was no trail to follow, but, picking his way as well as he could, Dick soon had the satisfaction of reaching the top, when, spread out below him, about a long stone-throw out, he saw the town of Honeysuckle.

It was active with the awakening life of another day, and most of the citizens he could see were either going to or coming from the Bummers' Retreat.

"Enjoy yourselves while you may," Dick muttered, grimly. "You will soon have cause to know that the threat of poor Henry Wilburt was not idle."

When he had spent a little time there, he returned to the cavern, there to find that Jacquetta had just made her morning toilet, and was looking anxiously for his return.

By the light of day Dick was fairly charmed with the sweet, pensive beauty of the maiden, and the forenoon passed in her company was certainly pleasant.

At noon, or a little later, they set out for the meeting-place.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BALL BEGINS TO ROLL.

It was about mid-afternoon, when three horsemen drew rein under a big pine.

Besides their horses, they had a mule that was burdened with a pack that was half as big as himself.

The foremost of the three was a handsome young man of twenty-eight, at a hasty guess. The other two were older, and looked like veterans of the mountains and the plains.

"Not here," spoke the younger man, as they came to a halt.

"Yes, but we *are* here," came a sweet, girlish voice, from a little distance away.

Looking in that direction, the three saw a young woman running toward them, a man following after her.

These were Jacquetta Wilburt and Deadwood Dick, and the others were the persons they had come there to meet.

The young man, who was Richard Princeton, sprang from his horse and ran to meet Jacquetta, and when they met they embraced. Then the young man turned to Dick, exclaiming:

"Hello, Hen! Glad to see you out of your—"

But he stopped, as there was no responsive light of recognition in Deadwood Dick's eyes, and looked to Jacquetta for some explanation.

"This gentleman is not poor Henry," she said, with lips aquiver. "Henry is dead. This is—"

"Dead!" cried Dick Princeton.

"Yes, dead," was the sad assurance. "Mr. Princeton, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Richard Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick."

"Deadwood Dick!" the young man cried.

"Why, I could swear that you are Henry, sir!"

"I am in disguise, as it has come about," Dick explained. "But, come," he added, "let us get off the trail as soon as we can, so as not to be seen."

"Mr. Bristol is to have full charge of this matter," explained Jacquetta. "I will explain all, later. Let us follow his advice, now, and get off the trail. You will soon know that it is all right."

"I have no doubt about that," declared Princeton. "I have heard of Deadwood Dick, as a man of honor and of dauntless courage. I am very glad he is here."

So they turned aside from the other trails, and took the direction that would lead them, finally, to the place where Jacquetta and her brother had made their mountain retreat.

Explanations were made as they went along, and by the time they came to a point where the animals had to be left, the situation of affairs was well understood by all.

The two men with Princeton, whom we have not introduced, were two old vets of the West, just as we surmised they were. But, they were not so much at home in this part of Arizona as they were further south. Their names were Obadiah Plumtree and Roderick Juniper.

When they had heard all the particulars of the case, and had Dick's explanation of how he intended to conduct the warfare, they fell right in with his plans, as did Princeton also.

"Et wull do 'em good," declared Juniper; while Plumtree echoed:

"Thet's what et wull."

From the spot where the animals had to be left, owing to the impossibility of getting them

over into the pocket, to the place where the cavern home was, was a matter of half a mile.

Dick, Princeton, and Jacquetta, went on, leaving the two mountaineers to the task of bringing the mule's load at their leisure.

It was night, by the time it was all in the cavern, safe, and the horses and mule had been finally cared for.

There was a large quantity of the hand-bombs, and enough provisions to last the party two weeks, if necessary. And the work being done, Bristol took the affair in hand and laid his plans, making sure that everything was understood.

And when he had done, everything was understood perfectly.

"Now," said Dick, "for my disguise."

"Yer kin take yer pick o' my duds," offered Plumtree.

"An' ther same o' mine," chimed in Juniper.

"And that is about my only chance, I guess, since the stock is limited," observed Dick.

"Hold on," cried Jacquetta; "some of father's clothes are in the chest here. I will get them out and you can take what you want of them."

So she did, and finally, out of all that was offered, Deadwood Dick selected enough to transform his appearance wonderfully.

Going outside, he donned the new costume, and when he came back into the cavern, all admitted that the change was wonderful.

"Yes; and all that is needed now," Dick said, "is to change the appearance of my face a little. I will ask one of you to cut off my mustache as close as you can."

"It's a shame to spoil it!" exclaimed Princeton.

"Can't help it," Dick declared; "off it must come, now."

So it was done, as he directed.

Dick next asked for grease, and taking it, he rubbed it well on the under side of one of the lids of the stove, and then smeared the mixture of grease and smut all over his face, neck and hands.

His own father could not have recognized him! He was the worst-looking specimen of the genus "bum" that any of those present had ever set eyes upon.

"Hyer I be!" he exclaimed, in a high, cracked voice, striking an attitude. "I am all hyer! This hyer is me what yer behold! I'm Dolly Doyle, ther twin brother ter David Doyle what war shot, an' don't make no mistake. Whoop!"

"You will do," was the general comment.

"Now I will be off," Dick said. "Remember: watch for my signal day after to-morrow, at sunrise. You can hear what I shout, from the peak up there. And have your bombs ready to throw as I direct."

"It shall be done," promised Princeton. "And you," he added, "do take care that you do not get trapped."

"I shall look out for that. Good-night. Owing to the condition of my paws, I can't shake hands with you."

Dick left the cavern and bent his steps in the direction of the secret way that led to Honey-suckle.

"Hyer I be! ther ontamed, four-horned, limber-j'inted old rollickin' old humbug of ther woolliest part of ther hull woolly West!"

So cried a hard-looking stranger, as he bounded into the Bummers' Retreat.

And then he proceeded to dance a few steps of a lively shuffle, after which he came to a sudden stop, and struck a pose with his left wrist braced against his hip and his battered hat in his right hand, in a would-be graceful bow.

Every eye was upon him in an instant.

And hard-looking he was, truly.

He was dirty, his clothes were ill-fitting, and he looked like a bad specimen generally.

It was fully half a minute before he moved or spoke.

"Feast yer eyes," he presently broke out, "fer et ain't likely that ye ever sawn ther like afore, an' et aire pritty sartain ther yer won't never see ther like again. Hyer I am, ther three-cornered cyclone of ther cloud clime, ther ragin' tornader what jest sots up on his hind legs an' howls when yer tries to cross him, every time!"

After that he came out of his attitude, clapped his hat on his head, danced a step more of the fantastic shuffle, and demanded:

"Sa-ay, feller galoots!"

"Wull, what aire et?" asked Robin Kerdoon, who was leaning on the outside of the bar, while his bartender was busy on the opposite.

"Does any of yer know of a feller in these parts named David Doyle, but most gen'ly called Dancin' Dave fer soon?"

Every man in the room looked at his neighbor.

"Ka'se ef yer do," the dirty stranger went right on, without waiting long for a reply, "hyer yer see his twin brother Dolly, what wants ter git some tidin's of his present abode o' residence."

"Thar was sich a feller lived hyer," said Kerdoon, slowly.

"And whar is he now?" Dick—we know it was he—demanded.

"He war laid away ter keep, a day or two ago," the mayor informed.

"What!" the stranger screamed, jumping a foot high.

"He aire dead," Kerdoon made plain.

"Great sneezin' snaix!" yapped the newcomer. "What war his ailin', mister? Tell me, fer I want ter know, quick."

"It war cold lead."

"Hungry, Howlin' Hanner! What! D'yer mean ter tell me thet Dancin' Dave ar' dead, an' thet his disease war lead? Screamin', Screechin' Sally! Jest show me ther imp what gev him ther pill, an' see me jerk out his backbone an' whale him ter death with et! Oh! this hyer ar' too much, too much! Whar kin I go ter weep? Say, ar' et so, an' no foolin' with ther 'feckshuns of a pore twin?"

"Oh, et aire ther truth fast ernough," assured Kerdoon. "Yer kin ask One-ear Bob, hyer, or any of ther boyees."

"Thet's what et aire," Bob assured likewise.

"But, who's ther feller what done et? Oh! jest let me see him, an' ef ther lightnin' don't strike his shanty, then you kin kick me. But, I opine he's been planted long afore this."

"He'd orter been," agreed Kerdoon, "but et ar' much to our discredit ter say thet sich ain't ther case et all. He guv us ther slip."

"Oh! Wuss an' wuss! But, who war et? Give me his name, an' ther color of his ha'r, an' ef I don't dangle his liver on my lodge-pole afore mornin', somebody kin dangle mine."

"Et war a young feller named Hen Wilburt," explained One-ear Bob. "But, you won't git him, fer no doubt he aire a hundred miles from hyer by this time, an' still a-goin'."

"Wull, ef thet's ther case, I opine et's no use," Dick observed; "but et ar' hard ter hev a twin snatched away from ye like this, an' right in ther bloom o' health an' beauty, too. Let's weep fer ther departed."

With that he turned away, and gave out a wild, mournful wail that caused all present to snicker.

"By ther way," he cried, suddenly brightening up and facing around, "did he leave any personal wealth layin' round loose? Ef he did, I claim et by right o' next o' kin, fer I opine ye can't git no closer nor what a twin is. Did he leave any sich? I hev come ter stay, anyhow, an' if thar's anything fer me, why jest say so. What's yer yaup? Don't talk too fast at me, nor all to oncet."

He looked around at the crowd then, waiting for some one to speak.

CHAPTER XIV.

VOTING IN A NEW CITIZEN.

EVERYBODY waited for the mayor.

"You don't seem ter know our rules hyer," that worthy remarked.

"Mabby I don't," the dirty Dolly Doyle admitted. "What aire them ar' rules to which you refer?"

"Well, one ar' to ther 'fect thet no galoot kin come hyer an' drop anker, unless we, ther cits of ther town, put et ter vote, an' decide in his favor."

"Ther dickins ter doost he can't!" cried Dolly Doyle. "I'd like ter know what is goin' ter hinder me from roostin' hyer ez long ez I please. This hyer ground hain't drifted out of ther United States, hev et?"

"Not to my knowledge et ain't," answered Kerdoon, "but the United States ain't got no finger in this hyer pie. We runs our town to suit ourselves, an' we don't take no advice from strangers, nohow. Thar ye hev et, flat from ther flipper, an' ef ye don't like it, do ther next thing."

"Sweet Susan Jane!" cried Dolly, as he stuck his thumbs under his belt and glared around, "this hyer ar' ther newest thing I ever see yet. So them ar' your rules an' reggylashuns hyer, be they? Wull, they ar' good, I opine, ef they would only work, which in this hyer case they won't. An' now jest pick yer ears an' hearken ter mine. I gen'ly come when I please, go when I please, an' stay jest ez long ez I please."

"Wull, yer won't do et hyer, unless ther boyees sez so."

"Ther boyees ber durn, an' you, too. Ef you

hev got ary galoot hyer what kin put me out, let's see him."

"Hyer he ar'," and One-ear Bob stepped to the fore.

Dolly Doyle looked at him critically.

"You?" he interrogated, disdainfully.

"Yas, me," retorted One-ear, "an' ef yer don't believe et, ketch on."

"Really, I don't want ter hurt ye, sonny," Dolly parleyed.

"Hurt me! Wull, I reckon not. Et would take jest twelve an' a half like you ter do thet."

"Ef you'll be responsible fer ther conseken-ses," Dolly still hesitated, "I'll see what ye kin do. I warn ye thet I'm a terror w' bells on when I get sot a-goin', though."

"Bahl we have seen terrors before ter-day," cried Bob. "Jest take thet fer a starter, an' come fer me."

As he said that, he reached out to slap the stranger in the face, but it did not work according to his programme.

Instead, Dolly ducked and gave Mr. Jolly a gentle poke in the bread-basket.

There was a howl then.

One-ear wheeled around and made a charge upon the greasy-looking stranger, as though he intended to catch hold of him and fling him over the mountains.

But again he was disappointed, for Dolly was not there when he thought he had him. Instead, that spry individual caught him by the shoulders, behind, and began to apply his boot to him with vigor.

"One!" he cried, giving him a lifter. "Two!" with another that made him utter a grunt. "Three!" and he was elevated once more, as though by steam-power. "Four!" and another groan was brought out of him. "And another, jest fer luck!" and with that one Dick let go of him and sent him sprawling on top of a table.

"What d'ye think erbout et now, sonny?" he demanded. "Ef thar's any one what owes you a good kickin', yer kin send him a receipt in full an' tell him thet ther debt ar' paid right up ter date, with interest. Ef ye want more, jest come fer me ag'in while I'm in ther proper mood fer et."

Mr. Jolly had by this time floundered from the table.

He was in a towering rage, and his face was spotted with purple clots of his boiling-over choler.

"What in blazes d'yer mean by thet?" he screamed. "How did you know thet anybody owed me a kickin'? How did you larn—"

"Hold on thar, my wild-eyed gazelle!" Dolly cried, interrupting, and he whipped out a revolver, "two kin play at thet aire game. Don't you draw thet aire pop on me, fer ef yer do thar will be a loop-hole in yer hull afore ye kin wink. Better took yer hand off o' thar, so's yer life won't be in sich danger."

There was no way out of it, so Mr. Jolly had to comply.

As for the crowd, they looked on in amazement. They had never seen the like of this before. And with the acknowledged best man in town, too.

"Sa-ay!" Bob demanded again, "how did yer know thet anybody owed me a kickin'? Come, chirp yer answer, quick!"

"Don't crowd ther pilgrims," Dolly advised. "I can't answer any quicker than soon, nohow. Ef I hev hit upon a fact in my remarks, why so much ther better fer me. Did somebody owe ye a bootin' really?"

"None of yer durn business, that's yer answer. But, come, I kin lick you in a fair fight, an' I know et. Put up yer bones, and I'll go fer ye."

"Anything ter be obligin'" responded Dolly. "Up they ar', but I warn ye thet they ar' hard," ez iron, when ye run ag'in' 'em."

"Oh, shut up, and look out fer yer eye."

"My eye is peeled, so come on."

One-ear Bob made a jump, a lunge, and a blow, expecting to end the matter at once, but he made a mistake again.

It was Deadwood Dick that he was "bucking" against, had he but known it, but he didn't, and was probably too enraged now to have cared, anyhow.

When he got there his opponent was gone. He had stepped nimbly aside, and the force of One-ear's blow carried him right on by, when Dick gave him another gentle kick as a reminder that he was around.

With a howl the bullwhacker whipped out a revolver, but again he was balked. The stranger's weapon was already spotted on his nose.

"Put et right up ag'in," Dolly Doyle warned. "Put et right up, sonny, unless ye ar' pinin' fer 'er j'ine ther band o' sable angels below. One

twitch of this hyer off finger o' mine, an' away ye goes."

It was of no use, so the bullwhacker had to shove the weapon back into his belt again, with as good grace as possible.

"Yas, but yer is a coward!" he yelled. "Yer won't stand up an' take yer dose like a man. Yer dodges, yer does, an' thet ain't fightin'."

"Yer wants me ter stand, then, do yer?" queried Dick.

"In course I does."

"Well, I'll stand."

"Thet aire ar' all I asks. Ef you don't lay afore ye ar' one-half a minnit older, then—"

"Then ye wull lay yerself, eh?" broke in Dick.

"All right, me charmin' cherub, we'll hev it jest ez you desire. Come on, now, an' hit me one right on ther snoot."

"Ef I do, et will sp'ile ther beauty of yer mug, ef ye hev got any beauty, which nobody kinsw'ar to, fer dirt."

"Et will be my funeral, ef yer do."

"You bet et wull!"

Mr. Jolly put up his fists again, and made ready for another bold rush.

He sparred at the air for a moment, as if to terrorize his opponent, and then at him he went with a rush.

The dirty and greasy Dolly stood his ground like a rock, as he had been requested to do, and this time he was found there, hard and fast.

One-ear Bob's arms were brushed aside with the utmost ease, apparently and in fact, and then there was a "smack" that was louder than a schoolboy's first kiss, and away Mr. Jolly went, end over end.

"I never saw ther like!" ejaculated Mayor Kerdoon.

"Et do beat the dizzy Dutch!" exclaimed Bow-leg John.

"Wonderful ter behold!" cried Pizen Pete.

Said one man:

"Ef thet aire ar' a sample, mister, I don't want a yard off ther piece, not by er durn sight I don't."

"Right hyer et ar'," cried Dolly, with a flourish of his arms. "Anybody want a sample of ther article? Et ar' right on tap, an' flowin' like water. Step right up, thirsty pilgrims, an' take all you want. I want ter make one job of et while ther mill is runnin'."

But nobody seemed to care for any, after what they had seen already.

By this time Mr. Jolly was getting himself out of tangle in the corner where he had been dropped, and got upon his feet with a decidedly sheepish air.

"Wur et a batterin'-ram?" he questioned rubbing his head.

This raised a laugh all round, and the dirty stranger's stock began to go up with a run.

"Wur et a batterin'-ram?" One-ear questioned again, "or wur et a lokymoty what kem inter kerlison wi' me? Et knocked me silly, an' I own up ter et."

"This hyer ar' ther article o' warfare what done ther job," declared Dolly, as he displayed his right fist. "Ef ye want ter try et ag'in, why jest come up to ther mark an' wade in."

"No, I thank yer," said the bruiser bullwhacker, "I respectfully decline, this time. I know when I hev hed enough of a good thing. Too much of et might turn me stummick. Say, mister, did you remark thet you ar' a twin to ther late Dancin' David?"

"Sich wur ther burdensome blat of my bazoo," responded Dolly.

"Then, Mayor Kerdoon," and One-ear turned to the mayor, "I take ther floor an' move ther motion thet we nommynat an' select this gentleman to ther honor o' full citizenship hyer, in ther place of ther afore-mentioned Dancin' David, defunct. What is yer warble?"

"Thet wull be jest ther cheese, creepers an' all," put in the stranger himself. "Et ar' ther best thing yer kin do, too, seein' thet I'm goin' ter stay anyhow."

Such a remark as this did not tickle the mayor any, but having seen the powers of the stranger displayed, he didn't take it up.

"Wull, ef thet ar' ther sentymint of ther boyees, so be et," he said.

"Yes, yes, et ar' all straight," cried out Dolly himself. "I second ther motion an' calls fer ther question. What is yer say, feller-sinners?"

"Yas, yas, he'll do, he'll do," came the cry from every quarter.

"Wull, what is ther vote?" asked the mayor.

"Yas, he's a cit! He's a cit!"

That was the cry from every man present, and it needed no further ballot to decide.

"Wull, Mister Dolly Doyle, ez ye say yer name ar'," spoke the worthy mayor, extending his hand to the new citizen, "allow me ter welcome

ye as one of us. You must uphold ther honor an' dignity of ther town, do your part in seein' that ther law is maintained, an' treat ther crowd in honor of yer election."

"Jawin', Jumpin' Johanner!" cried the newly made cit, "thet aire last condition ar' onpossible, 'kase I'm strapped. But, ef my poor defunct twin left anything, ter which I am duly entitled by right o' bein' next o' kin, why walk right up an' wet your whistles at his expense. Trot out yer p'izen, Mister Barkeeper, an' put et on ther slate to my account, an' ef it never gets settled, why, jest set et down ter profit an' loss."

From that hour till after midnight, there was a wild jubilee in the Bummers' Retreat and about every citizen, except the new-comer, who did not indulge himself, was pretty thoroughly "corned."

And then Deadwood Dick, as "Dolly Doyle," was conducted to the shanty of the late Dancing David, where he retired.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK RECLAIMS HIS DOLLARS.

NEXT morning Honeysuckle was thrown into a great excitement.

In several conspicuous places about the town, were posted notices that made the citizens tear their hair.

These notices were all alike, and all to the same purpose, and a copy of one is a copy of all. They were to the following effect:

"WARNING NOTICE!"

"TO ALL THE MURDERERS, THIEVES, OUTLAWS AND WHAT-NOT, OF THE TOWN OF HONEYSUCKLE,—

Greeting:—

"You are warned that unless you are out of this pocket by daylight to-morrow morning, you die! You have been warned before, with a month's notice. If you do not heed, on your own heads be the terrible vengeance of the rightful owner of these diggings, Henry Wilburt. This is no idle threat. You will find this out to your sorrow, if you are found here after twenty-four hours. Be warned, and go! My eye is on you."

(Signed)

"THE HUMMING-BIRD OF HONEYSUCKLE."

"Durn ther Hummin'-Bird!" cried One-ear Bob. "Jest let me see et, an' I'll wing ther critter."

He looked up to the sky, as he spoke, and there sailed the eagle, as though watching the town, and a general howl was raised at the sight.

"Et ar' ther doin's of thet aire Hen Wilburt!" cried the mayor. "Pity we didn't string him up soon's we got him."

"Thet's what et ar'," agreed the others, in chorus.

Dolly Doyle was on hand, of course, to howl with the rest.

"Leave ther diggin's?" he cried; "not by er durn sight!"

"But, what are we going to do?" asked the mayor, who was really troubled by the notice, as he had good reason to be. "Ther may be a good deal in et, yer know. I don't want no cold lead in mine."

"What be we goin' ter do?" cried Dolly. "Why, we is goin' ter stay in an' fight et out, thet's what; leastways I am, ef I hev ter do et all alone. Ain't we a hundred strong?"

"We ar' when all ther boyees ar' hyer," answered the mayor, "but ten or a dozen of 'em ar' away."

"Plenty left, plenty left," Dolly assured. "Ef we can't hold ther fort, yer kin sell me fer a lunk-headed lizard, thet's all."

A little more of such talk as that fixed the citizens in their course, and it was decided to stay and fight it out. They believed they could hold the place against anything short of a regiment of soldiers.

And, somehow, Dolly Doyle had come to be the acknowledged head in the matter of preparing the defense. He seemed to have the knack of a born leader, and the others soon felt the power of his views and fell right in with whatever he proposed. And it need not be added that he arranged things to suit his own plans.

He told every man to get hold of every weapon he could lay his hands on, and to load them all, and get all the ammunition they could and have it ready on their persons. Then, when the time for the jubilee came, they would be ready to fall right in and pepper their assailants right and left. And that was what the citizens did, and the rest of the day they went about like walking arsenals.

No work was done that day, but the citizens loafed around the Bummers' Retreat, where they imbibed freely of Robin Kerdoon's wares, and talked over the situation to the full limit. And

the more they talked, the stronger became their determination to hold the pocket against all comers.

It was about mid-afternoon when a loud report was heard, seemingly down at the eastern end of the pocket.

The report was louder than that of a rifle, and in fact was loud enough for a small cannon. "What wur thet?" exclaimed Kerdoon, as he sprung for the door.

Every man in the saloon followed, save one. And that one was Dolly Doyle, the new citizen of the town.

As soon as the exodus for the door began, he slipped behind the bar, and in a few brief moments had skillfully "doctored" the poisonous stuff there displayed on the shelves.

This was one point in the plot that was to be worked, and needs no explaining. It had been carefully arranged for. A bomb had been thrown, to draw the attention of the crowd, and thus give Dick time to do what he had now accomplished.

No one discovered him in the act, for the attention of the crowd was in the direction from which the sound had come. In a little while, however, he was with them, in the front ranks, and shouting with the loudest. And he was the most vigorous in his demands to know what it meant, anyhow.

No explanation being given or guessed, the crowd returned to the saloon, all wondering what the report could have been, or what it implied.

At a wonderfully early hour that evening men began to drop asleep just wherever they happened to be, and others, many of them, feeling so decidedly weary, sought their bunks.

"Wull, I ber durn!" exclaimed the proprietor of the Bummers' Retreat, as he looked over his domain about nine o'clock, "ef I ever sawn anything like this hyer. The durnest lot o' sleepy-heads thet I ever did see."

"I opine you're right," agreed Dolly Doyle, "an' hyer's another what ain't a big heap better. I reckon I'll trot off ter my roost. Et must be ther reaction of ther great excitement of ther day. Good-night, mayor."

"Good-night, Dolly; but don't fail ter be out at daybreak."

"I'll be out, you bet."

So Dick went off to the cabin of the late Dancing David, but, not to sleep. He would not trust himself to close his eyes, for he had business to attend to.

It was about midnight when he went forth again. The camp was dark, and every soul in it was asleep.

"Asleep, clear up to the muzzle," Dick observed, as he looked around the place and listened.

He made his way to the door of the saloon, and looked in.

The door was open, but the lights were out, and the loud snoring of the men lying around made a lively discord.

Dick entered, and going behind the bar, found a candle and soon had a light.

And then he looked around over the fallen braves.

"There will be a surprise in store for you when morning dawns, my hearties," he mused. "But it will be one that you heartily deserve, for never in my life did I get into a den of worse cut-throats."

Putting down the candle on the bar, he went from man to man, taking away every firearm each possessed, as well as ammunition.

This work he continued until he had visited every man in the camp, securing all the weapons except knives and flinging them by armfuls into a gully at the end of the pocket, a place from which they could not readily be recovered.

That work done, he left the pocket by the secret way and went back to his friends, to whom he "reported progress," and related all that had taken place in the outlaw stronghold.

Cleaning himself up, and reassuming the clothes he had doffed, those he had taken from the dead man, he was again, to those who had known Harry Wilburt, very like that person. The only difference was that now his mustache was wanting.

Then after further talk about the plans of the morning, he returned to Honeysuckle, Princeton and the two mountaineers going with him.

Dick noticed that the rock-door at the end of the long cavern worked a little hard, and opened with a jerky motion, but it closed all right after they had passed out into the pocket.

He led his companions straight to one of the shanties, where two men lay on a bunk on the floor, sleeping never more soundly.

These were Pizen Pete and Bow-leg John, the

two men who had shot him down and robbed him a few days before.

Dick had already visited their shanty, and had recovered a good deal of his money and his diamonds, but there was still more somewhere, he knew.

"I don't know how we can wake them up," Dick observed, "unless cold water will do it. There is a spring over behind the saloon, and we'll go there and get some buckets of water."

So they did, finding pails in the saloon.

When they returned, they gave the two wretches a good bath, which had the desired effect, for they soon sat up, rubbing their eyes, and wanted to know "what in all durnation had broke loose, anyhow."

"But their eyes soon fell upon Deadwood Dick, and Pizen Pete exclaimed:

"Durn me ef et ain't Hen Wilburt!"

"An' we'll capter him!" cried Bow-leg.

"I don't think you will," returned Dick, grimly, and he covered them with a revolver.

The fellows felt for their weapons, or rather had already felt, and their ugly faces blanched at finding them gone.

"Tricked!" gasped Pete.

And "Trapped!" cried John.

"Yes, tricked and trapped," assured Dick, "I am not Henry Wilburt, however, but I am Deadwood Dick, whom you shot, robbed and left for dead on the trail the other night. I have come to get my dollars!"

The two fellows' eyes stuck out like two eggs, and their jaws dropped open.

"I am giving it to you straight," Dick assured. "Come, you want to trot it out, and lively, or you will be swinging from the limb of Kerdoon's lifter before you know it."

Dick had already secured some of his dollars as said, taking with the rest the gold coins that had served as buttons and braid.

"Wull yer spare us, ef we gives et up?" Pete asked.

"Yas, spare us, an' we'll give et all back to yer," cried John.

"All right; restore it to me, and we won't hang you," Dick promised.

"Et ar' a bargain. You'll find ther kerdoodleum in a hole in ther ground, under ther middle of ther table there."

The table was quickly jerked out of the way, and the men with Dick began a search for the treasure, which was soon brought to light. Dick counted up, and found that only about a thousand dollars of it had been spent.

The two rascals' hands were tied behind their backs, then, and they were marched out into the night, and taken to the saloon. There the sleepers were still snoring their best. Dick and the others there broke into Kerdoon's strong box and rifled it, as its contents properly belonged to Jacquetta Wilburt. And as Kerdoon had carried on a sort of private banking business, the amount of gold on hand was considerable. It was no robbery, but a fair taking back of what had been stolen.

That done, Dick led the others, with the two prisoners, back to the secret entrance to the cavern, and the prisoners were taken on under charge of Princeton, Dick remaining.

Again he noticed that the wonderful moving rock did not work well, and was yet more jerky in its motion, as it closed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION.

MORNING dawned, and gradually the town awoke, and the toughs began to assemble at the saloon.

About the time all had got around, a man was seen coming up the one street, who, when recognized, caused a big stir of excitement.

It was none other than the supposed Henry Wilburt, and he was walking along as coolly as though there was no danger in Honeysuckle for him, but rather as though he owned the whole place.

There was a general movement of hands to hips, for weapons, for they could but infer that his appearance "meant business," but when the toughs to a man discovered that they were disarmed, such a howl as went up had never been rivaled there.

Out came Mayor Kerdoon, boiling over with rage, and demanding to know what was the meaning of it all, and who was at the bottom of it.

And then, presently, went up a cry for the new citizen, Dolly Doyle, as he was not to be seen in the crowd.

But when the mayor's attention had been called to Henry Wilburt, as Deadwood Dick was supposed to be, then the bubble of his fury burst.

"At him!" he yelled. "At him, an' cut him

infer mincemeat with yer knives! Et ar' him whut's at ther bottom of et all! Go fer him, I say, an' chaw him all up!"

But by that time the personage in question had carried a box out to the middle of the street, at a good distance from the saloon, and, standing on it, with his revolvers drawn, he faced the crowd.

He had them all at bay, and no one cared to be the first to lead a rush upon him.

"Outlaws of Honeysuckle, give me your attention!" cried Dick, his voice ringing out sharp and clear. "You had fair warning to leave this pocket, and you did not heed it. Now, once again, I offer you the chance to go if you will. If not, then let your doom be upon your own heads. In ten minutes from this your town will be in ruins, and you will be dead among the fragments."

"Yer talks like er fool!" cried Robin Kerdoon. "Don't think yer kin skeer us by any sich ghost-story ez thet aire."

"You will soon see, murderers; if you stay here."

"At him!" cried Kerdoon. "Chop him all up fine!"

"Yes, mangle him so's ye kin stir him with a stick!" echoed One-ear Bob.

But neither of these gentlemen took the lead to do it.

"You have been howling for Dolly Doyle," Deadwood Dick went on; "I am he! I gave you the kicking I promised, Mr. Bob Jolly, and now I am about to carry out my other threats in regard to this hell-hole you have made here. You had a notice of thirty days to get out, and the time is up. You are still here, and now you must suffer the consequences. If you do not start in one minute, the fun will begin."

"You Dolly Doyle!" cried Kerdoon.

"You!" repeated One-ear.

"Yes, I," Dick assured. "And now, a last chance: are you going or not?"

"In course we ain't goin'!" was the general shout. "An', what is more, we defies yer!"

added the mayor of that Satan's hotbed.

"Very well," said Dick, "you have sealed your fate. Do you see that eagle soaring up there? You have named it the Humming-bird of Honeysuckle. Your fate rests with that noble bird. One word from me, and it will drop destruction and death into your midst."

This was fiction, of course.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Kerdoon, but forcing the laugh, for his face was now growing pale; "thet aire ar' baby-talk, an' nothin' else. We'll show yer a trick wuth two o' that. Capter him, boyees, an' we'll string him higher'n a kite!" But the "boyees" still held off, wisely.

"It is baby-talk, is it," resumed Dick. "Well, see whether it is or not."

He took off his hat, waved it over his head, and shouted aloud:

"Humming-bird of Honeysuckle, let thy work of retribution begin!"

There was a moment of utter silence, during which every eye was fixed upon the eagle; then the silence was broken in a most startling manner.

A small object was seen to fall, as though from the sky; there was a loud explosion, and a great portion of the Bummers' Retreat saloon was blown to splinters.

"An idle threat, is it!" cried Dick. "What think ye of it, now?"

But the crowd was too terrified and astonished to move or speak.

"Boom!"

Another great hole was blown in the saloon. And then two more reports in quick succession, one of them right in the dumfounded crowd.

This broke the spell, and with one accord the mob drew knives and made a mad rush upon Deadwood Dick.

Dick saw that they were now reckless in their desperation; so firing and wounding the two foremost in the van, he took to his heels and started for the secret passage, with the howling crowd after him.

He had the start, by a good hundred feet, and needed all of it, for the moment he came to the rocks he would be retarded by climbing to the plateau, and they might catch him there.

But, even as he ran, he heard the loud report of the exploding bombs behind him, and the ranks were being thinned at every discharge.

Still the pursuit was being kept up.

There were two reasons. One was, the desire to take the life of the man who had called down such a destruction upon them; the other, to escape by the way he escaped himself.

Dick ran at his best speed, and soon reached the rocks, where he turned and "winged" two or three more of the nearest pursuers, and then up the rocks he sprung to the plateau.

It had been a mad chase, and it was not done yet.

By the time he reached the top, others were beginning the climb, so, with a bound, Dick crossed the rocky space and sprung into the niche that opened the secret passage.

But, to his surprise and horror, the rock refused to move!

He pushed, but pushed in vain! It seemed as immovable as the very hill itself, and now the enemy were upon the plateau with him!

Dick wheeled, and now firing not to wound but to kill, dropped two more of them, as they sprung after him across the open space, and then once again exerted his strength upon the rocks that held the entrance to the cavern barred.

Suddenly something snapped, and the rock rolled back. But it did more. It toppled over and fell, leaving the mouth of the cavern wide open.

Deadwood Dick sprung in just in time to escape the angry knives that were almost upon him, and ran with all his might to get to the narrow footway mentioned in a previous chapter.

After him rushed the mob, pell-mell, cursing and shouting in mad frenzy.

Dick used exceeding care, as he neared the place where the awful chasm was, and as soon as his hands felt the rope he hastened out along the narrow ledge.

It was so dark, even though the mouth of the cavern was now open, that he could barely see the darker chasm, and he stopped, knowing what must happen.

And happen it did, for there was nothing to save.

On came the mob, in mad pursuit, and then—But it was soon over, and the last of their cries of horror came back from the depths below like the wail of doom. They had run madly right into the jaws of a terrible death.

Dick retreated then from the narrow ledge, and reloading his revolvers, went out upon the plateau.

The work of destruction was still going on in the pocket, and one after another the buildings were being shattered by the bombs and leveled to the ground. Some of the men were still to be seen running for the trail at the other side of the pocket, by which they quickly disappeared.

Dick returned to the pocket, where in due time he was joined by the others.

"What a horror it was!" cried Jacquetta, covering her eyes to shut it out.

"But, think of the murder of your father, and the death of your brother," reminded Bristol.

"Yes, yes, it was a righteous judgment upon them, for they would not heed a timely warning."

And indeed such had it been.

The wounded wretches were cared for and the rubbish of the demolished building was burned.

When that had been done, claim-stakes were posted, according to mining laws, claiming the pocket in the name of Jacquetta Wilburt, and then the party set out for home, leaving a few of the least wounded to care for the others, but Dick took along his two prisoners, whom he turned over to the first deputy-sheriff he could find, and they were ere long well housed in State's Prison for robbery and attempted murder.

When Honeysuckle, under a new name, was at length reinhabited, it was by the employees and friends of the rightful owner, and there now thrives a respectable camp—as camps in the wild Southwest go, which toughs and desperadoes, however, avoid as a pit of doom—as it was to so many of their comrades.

Richard Princeton and Jacquetta Wilburt married, and are very happy in each other's love.

The bodies of father and brother were recovered and reinterred in consecrated ground, elsewhere.

They still have the tamed eagle, Old Baldy, and will have the bird till it dies, if they live until that day comes, for eagles are long lived. Deadwood Dick had tried to buy the bird, but that was impossible; Baldy was a priceless possession to the devoted Jacquetta.

The two old scouts, Plumtree and Juniper, are still in the employ of Princeton and are wholly happy in his service.

And the redoubtable Prince of Detectives?

He left the pocket, restless wanderer that he had become, with the admiration of all, which was pay enough for the services he had rendered, and sure that he would be "called," ere long, to cope with villainy in some form—in which work he seemed destined to live, or, mayhap, die; who can say, which?

THE END.

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